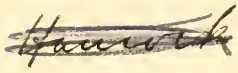
WATERSPRINGS

A. C. BENSON

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/watersprings00bens

WATERSPRINGS

Works by Arthur C. Benson, C.V.O.

MEMOIRS OF ARTHUR HAMILTON.
ARCHBISHOP LAUD: A Study.
POEMS.
LYRICS.
ESSAYS.
LORD VYET and Other Poems.
FASTI ETONENSES.
LIFE OF ARCHBISHOP BENSON.
THE PROFESSOR and Other Poems.
THE SCHOOLMASTER.
THE HOUSE OF QUIET.
TENNYSON (Little Biographies Series).
SELECTIONS FROM WHITTIER.
THE HILL OF TROUBLE.
THE ISLES OF SUNSET.
ROSSETTI (English Men of Letters Series).
PEACE and Other Poems.
EDWARD FITZGERALD (English Men of Letters Series).
THE UPTON LETTERS.
THE THREAD OF GOLD.
WALTER PATER (English Men of Letters Series).
FROM A COLLEGE WINDOW.
THE GATE OF DEATH.
BESIDE STILL WATERS.
THE ALTAR FIRE.
AT LARGE.
POEMS (Collected).
THE SILENT ISLE.
RUSKIN: A Study in Personality.
THE LEAVES OF THE TREE.
THE CHILD OF THE DAWN.
PAUL THE MINSTREL and Other Stories.
THY ROD AND THY STAFF.
ALONG THE ROAD.
JOYOUS GARD.

With H. F. W. Tatham

MEN OF MIGHT.

Edited, with Viscount Esher

SELECTIONS FROM THE CORRESPONDENCE OF QUEEN VICTORIA.

London: Smith, Elder & Co., 15 Waterloo Place, S.W.

WATERSPRINGS

BY

ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON

"For in the wilderness shall waters break out,
and streams in the desert"

LONDON
SMITH, ELDER & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE
1913

[All rights reserved]

PR 4099
B45W3
1913

Printed by Ballantyne, Hanson & Co.
at the Ballantyne Press, Edinburgh

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	The Scene	1
II.	Restlessness	24
III.	Windlow	33
IV.	The Pool	40
V.	On the Down	54
VI.	The Home Circle	57
VII.	Country Life	73
VIII.	The Inheritance	91
IX.	The Vicar	102
X.	With Maud Alone	113
XI.	Jack	128
XII.	Diplomacy	131
XIII.	Giving Away	140
XIV.	Back to Cambridge	144
XV.	Jack's Escapade	149
XVI.	The Visit	158
XVII.	Self-suppression	175
XVIII.	The Picnic	183
XIX.	Despondency	202
XX.	Highmindedness	209

CHAP. PAGE
XXI. The Awakening 214
XXII. Love and Certainty 226
XXIII. The Wedding 230
XXIV. Discoveries 236
XXV. The New Knowledge 244
XXVI. Love is Enough 247
XXVII. The New Life 251
XXVIII. The Vicar's View 257
XXIX. The Child 265
XXX. Cambridge Again 275
XXXI. Making the Best of It 281
XXXII. Howard's Profession 283
XXXIII. Anxiety 288
XXXIV. The Dream-child 295
XXXV. The Power of Love 307
XXXVI. The Truth 317

WATERSPRINGS

I

THE SCENE

The bright pale February sunlight lay on the little court of Beaufort College, Cambridge, on the old dull-red smoke-stained brick, the stone mullions and mouldings, the Hall oriel, the ivied buttresses and battlements, the turrets, the tiled roofs, the quaint chimneys, and the lead-topped cupola over all. Half the court was in shadow. It was incredibly picturesque, but it had somehow the look of a fortress rather than of a house. It did not exist only to be beautiful, but had a well-worn beauty of age and use. There was no domestic adornment of flower-bed or garden-border, merely four squares of grass, looking like faded carpets laid on the rather uncompromising pebbles which floored the pathways. The golden hands of the clock pointed to a quarter to ten, and the chimes uttered their sharp, peremptory voices. Two or three young men stood talking at the vaulted gateway, and one or two figures in dilapidated gowns and caps, holding books, fled out of the court.

A firm footstep came down one of the stairways ; a man of about forty passed out into the court—Howard Kennedy, Fellow and Classical Lecturer of the College. His thick curly brown hair showed a trace of grey, his short pointed beard was grizzled, his complexion sanguine, his eyebrows thick. There were little vague lines on his forehead, and his eyes were large and clear ; an interesting, expressive face, not technically handsome, but both clever and good-natured. He was carelessly dressed in rather old but well-cut clothes, and had an air of business-like decisiveness which became him well, and made him seem comfortably at home in the place ; he nodded and smiled to the undergraduates at the gate, who smiled back and saluted. He met a young man rushing down the court, and said to him, " That's right, hurry up ! You'll just be in time," a remark which was answered by a gesture of despair from the young man. Then he went up the court towards the Hall, entered the flagged passage, looked for a moment at the notices on the screen, and went through into the back court, which was surrounded by a tiny cloister.

Here he met an elderly man, clean-shaven, fresh-coloured, acute-looking, who wore a little round bowler hat perched on a thick shock of white hair. He was dressed in a black coat and waistcoat, with a black tie, and wore rather light grey trousers. One would have taken him for an old-fashioned

country solicitor. He was, as a matter of fact, the Vice-Master and Senior Fellow of the College—Mr. Redmayne, who had spent his whole life there. He greeted the younger man with a kindly, brisk, ironical manner, saying, "You look very virtuous, Kennedy! What are you up to?"

"I am going for a turn in the garden," said Howard; "will you come with me?"

"You are very good," said Mr. Redmayne; "it will be quite like a dialogue of Plato!"

They went down the cloister to a low door in the corner, which Howard unlocked, and turned into a small old-fashioned garden, surrounded on three sides by high walls, and overlooking the river on the fourth side; a gravel path ran all round; there were a few trees, bare and leafless, and a big bed of shrubs in the centre of the little lawn, just faintly pricked with points of green. A few aconites showed their yellow heads above the soil.

"What are those wretched little flowers?" said Mr. Redmayne, pointing at them contemptuously.

"Oh, don't say that," said Howard; "they are always the first to struggle up, and they are the earliest signs of spring. Those are aconites."

"Aconites? Deadly poison!" said Mr. Redmayne, in a tone of horror. "Well, I don't object to them,—though I must say that I prefer the works of man to the works of God at all times and in

all places. I don't like the spring—it's a languid and treacherous time ; it always makes me feel that I wish I were doing something else."

They paced for some minutes round the garden gossiping, Redmayne making very trenchant criticisms, but evidently enjoying the younger man's company. At something which he said, Howard uttered a low laugh, which was pleasant to hear from the sense of contented familiarity which it gave.

" Ah, you may laugh, my young friend," said Redmayne, " but when you have reached my time of life and see everything going to pieces round you, you have occasionally to protest against the general want of backbone, and the sentimentality of the age."

" Yes, but you don't *really* object," said Howard ; " you know you enjoy your grievances ! "

" Well, I am a philosopher," said Mr. Redmayne, " but you are overdoing your philanthropics. Luncheon in Hall for the boys, dinner at seven-thirty for the boys, a new cricket-ground for the boys ; you pamper them ! Now in my time, when the undergraduates complained about the veal in Hall, old Grant sent for us third-year men, and said that he understood there were complaints about the veal, of which he fully recognised the justice, and so they would go back to mutton and beef and stick to them, and then he bowed us out. Now the Bursar would

send for the cook, and they would mingle their tears together."

Howard laughed again, but made no comment, and presently said he must go back to work. As they went in, Mr. Redmayne put his hand in Howard's arm, and said, "Don't mind me, my young friend! I like to have my growl, but I am proud of the old place, and you do a great deal for it."

Howard smiled, and tucked the old man's hand closer to his side with a movement of his arm. "I shall come and fetch you out again some morning," he said.

He got back to his rooms at ten o'clock, and a moment afterwards a young man appeared in a gown. Howard sat down at his table, pulled a chair up to his side, produced a corrected piece of Latin prose, made some criticisms and suggestions, and ended up by saying, "That's a good piece! You have improved a good deal lately, and that would get you a solid mark." Then he sat for a minute or two talking about the books his pupil was reading, and indicating the points he was to look out for, till at half-past ten another youth appeared to go through the same process. This went on until twelve o'clock. Howard's manner was kindly and business-like, and the undergraduates were very much at their ease. One of them objected to one of his criticisms. Howard turned to a dictionary

and showed him a paragraph. "You will see I am right," he said, "but don't hesitate to object to anything I say—these usages are tricky things!" The undergraduate smiled and nodded.

Just before twelve o'clock he was left alone for five minutes, and a servant brought in a note. Howard opened it, and taking a sheet of paper, began to write. At the hour a youth appeared, of very boyish aspect, curly-haired, fresh-looking, ingenuous. Howard greeted him with a smile. "Half a minute, Jack!" he said. "There's the paper—not the *Sportsman*, I'm afraid, but you can console yourself while I just finish this note." The boy sat down by the fire, but instead of taking the paper, drew a solemn-looking cat, which was sitting regarding the hearth, on to his knee, and began playing with it. Presently Howard threw his pen down. "Come along," he said. The boy, still carrying the cat, came and sat down beside him. The lesson proceeded as before, but there was a slight difference in Howard's manner of speech, as of an uncle with a favourite nephew. At the end, he pushed the paper into the boy's hand, and said, "No, that isn't good enough, you know; it's all too casual—it isn't a bit like Latin: you don't do me credit!" He spoke incisively enough, but shook his head with a smile. The boy said nothing, but got up, vaguely smiling, and holding the cat tucked under his arm—a charming picture of healthy and

indifferent youth. Then he said in a rich infantile voice, "Oh, it's all right. I didn't do myself justice this time. You shall see!"

At this moment the old servant came in and asked Howard if he would take lunch.

"Yes; I won't go into Hall," said Howard. "Lunch for two—you can stay and lunch with me, Jack; and I will give you a lecture about your sins."

The boy said, "Yes, thanks very much; I'd love to."

Jack Sandys was a pupil of Howard's in whom he had a special interest. He was the son of Frank Sandys, the Vicar of the Somersetshire parish where Mrs. Graves, Howard's aunt, lived at the Manor-house. Frank Sandys was a cousin of Mrs. Graves' deceased husband. She had advised the Vicar to send Jack to Beaufort, and had written specially commending him to Howard's care. But the boy had needed little commendation. From the first moment that Jack Sandys had appeared, smiling and unembarrassed, in Howard's room, a relation that was almost filial and paternal had sprung up between them. He had treated Howard from the outset with an innocent familiarity, and asked him the most direct questions. He was not a particularly intellectual youth, though he had some vague literary interests; but he was entirely healthy, good, and quite irresistibly charming in his naïveté

and simplicity. Howard had a dislike of all sentimentality, but the suppressed paternal instinct which was strong in him had been awakened; and though he made no emotional advances, he found himself strangely drawn to the boy, with a feeling for which he could not wholly account. He did not care for Jack's athletic interests; his tastes and mental processes were obscure to him. Howard's own nature was at once intellectual and imaginative, but he felt an extreme delight in the fearless and direct confidence which the boy showed in him. He criticised his work unsparingly, he rallied him on his tastes, he snubbed him, but all with a sense of real and instinctive sympathy which made everything easy. The boy never resented anything that he said, asked his advice, looked to him to get him out of any small difficulties that arose. They were not very much together, and mostly met only on official occasions. Howard was a busy man, and had little time, or indeed taste, for vague conversation. Jack was a boy of natural tact, and he treated all the authorities with the same unembarrassed directness. Undergraduates are quick to remark on any sort of favouritism, but only if they think that the favoured person gets any unfair advantage by his intimacy. But Howard came down on Jack just as decisively as he came down on anyone else whose work was unsatisfactory. It was known that they were a sort of cousins; and, moreover, Jack Sandys

was generally popular, though only in his first year, because he was free from any touch of uppishness, and of an imperturbable good-humour.

But his own feeling for the boy surprised Howard. He did not think him very interesting, nor had they much in common except a perfect goodwill. It was to Howard as if Jack represented something beyond and further than himself, for which Howard cared—as one might love a house for the sake of someone that had inhabited it, or because of events that had happened there. He tried vaguely to interest Jack in some of the things he cared about, but wholly in vain. That cheerful youth went quietly on his own way—modest, handsome, decided, knowing exactly what he liked, with very material tastes and ambitions, not in the least emotional or imaginative, and yet with a charm of which all were conscious. He was bored by any violent attempts at friendship, and quite content in almost anyone's company, naturally self-contained and temperate, making no claims and giving no pledges; and yet Howard was deeply haunted by the sense that Jack stood for something almost bewilderingly fine which he himself could not comprehend or interpret, and of which the boy himself was wholly and radiantly unconscious. It gave him, indeed, a sudden warmth about the heart to see Jack in the court, or even to think of him as living within the same walls; but there was nothing jealous or exclusive about

his interest, and when they met, there was often nothing particular to say.

Presently lunch was announced, and Howard led the way to a little panelled parlour which looked out on the river. They both ate with healthy appetites; and presently Jack, looking about him, said, "This room is rather nice! I don't know how you make your rooms so nice?"

"Mostly by having very little in them except what I want," said Howard. "These panelled rooms don't want any ornaments; people spoil rooms by stuffing them, just as you spoil my cat," —Jack was feeding the cat with morsels from his plate.

"It's a nice cat," said Jack; "at least I like it in your rooms. I wouldn't have one in my rooms, not if I were paid for it—it would be what the Master calls a serious responsibility." Presently, after a moment's silence, Jack said, "It's rather convenient to be related to a don, I think. By the way, what sort of screw do they give you—I mean your income—I suppose I oughtn't to ask?"

"It isn't usually done," said Howard, "but I don't mind your asking, and I don't mind your knowing. I have about six hundred a year here."

"Oh, then I was right," said Jack. "Symonds said that all the dons had about fifteen hundred a year out of the fees; he said that it wouldn't be worth their while to do it for less. But I said it

was much less. My father only gets about two hundred a year out of his living, and it all goes to keep me at Cambridge. He says that when he is vexed about things; but he must have plenty of his own. I wish he would really tell me. Don't you think people ought to tell their sons about their incomes?"

"I am afraid you are a very mercenary person," said Howard.

"No, I'm not," said Jack; "only I think one ought to know, and then one could arrange. Father's awfully good about it, really; but if ever I spend too much, he shakes his head and talks about the workhouse. I used to be frightened, but I don't believe in the workhouse now."

When luncheon was over, they went back to the other room. It was true that, as Jack had said, Howard managed to make something pleasant out of his rooms. The study was a big place looking into the court; it was mostly lined with books, the bookcases going round the room in a band about three feet from the floor and about seven feet high. It was a theory of Howard's that you ought to be able to see all your books without either stooping or climbing. There was a big knee-hole table and half a dozen chairs. There was an old portrait in oils over the mantelpiece, several arm-chairs, one with a book-rest. Half a dozen photographs stood on the mantelpiece, and there was practically

nothing else in the room but carpets and curtains. Jack lit a cigarette, sank into a chair, and presently said, "You must get awfully sick of the undergraduates, I should think, day after day?"

"No, I don't," said Howard; "in fact I must confess that I like work and feel dull without it—but that shows that I am an elderly man."

"Yes, I don't care about my work," said Jack, "and I think I shall get rather tired of being up here before I have done with it. It's rather pointless, I think. Of course it's quite amusing; but I want to do something real, make some real money, and talk about business. I shall go into the city, I think."

"I don't believe you care about anything but money," said Howard; "you are a barbarian!"

"No, I don't care about money," said Jack; "only one must have enough—what I like are *real* things. I couldn't go on just learning things up till I was twenty-three, and then teaching them till I was sixty-three. Of course I think it is awfully good of you to do it, but I can't think why or how you do it."

"I suppose I don't care about real things," said Howard.

"No, I can't quite make you out," said Jack with a smiling air, "because of course you are quite different from the other dons—nobody would suppose you were a don—everyone says that."

"It's very kind of you to say so," said Howard, "but I am not sure that it is a compliment—a tradesman ought to be a tradesman, and not to be ashamed of it. I'm a sophist, of course."

"What's a sophist?" said Jack. "Oh, I know. You lectured about the sophists last term. I don't remember what they were exactly, but I thought the lecture awfully good—quite amusing! They were a sort of parsons, weren't they?"

"You are a wonderful person, Jack!" said Howard, laughing. "I declare I have never had such extraordinary things said to me as you have said in the last half-hour."

"Well, I want to know about people," said Jack, "and I think it pays to ask them. You don't mind, do you? That's the best thing about you, that I can say what I think to you without putting my foot in it. But you said you were going to lecture me about my sins—come on!"

"No," said Howard, "I won't. You are not serious enough to-day, and I am not vexed enough. You know quite well what I think. There isn't any harm in you; but you are idle, and you are inquisitive. I don't want you to be very different, on the whole, if only you would work a little more and take more interest in things."

"Well," said Jack, "I do take interest—that's the mischief; there isn't time to work—that's the truth! I shall scrape through the Trip, and then

I shall have done with all this nonsense about the classics ; it really is humbug, isn't it ? Such a fuss about nothing. The books I like are those in which people say what they might say, not those in which they say what they have had days to invent. I don't see the good of that. Why should I work, when I don't feel interested ? "

" Because whatever you do, you will have to do things in which you are not interested," said Howard.

" Well, I think I will wait and see," said Jack. " And now I must be off. I really have said some awful things to you to-day, and I must apologise ; but I can't help it when I am with you ; I feel I must say just what comes into my head ; I must fly ; thank you for lunch ; and I truly will do better, but mind only for *you*, and not because I think it's any good." He put down the cat with a kiss. " Good-bye, Mimi," he said ; " remember me, I beseech you ! " and he hurried away.

Howard sat still for a minute or two, looking at the fire ; then he gave a laugh, got up, stretched himself, and went out for a walk.

Even so quiet a thing as a walk was not unattended by a certain amount of ceremonial. Howard passed some six or seven men of his acquaintance, some of whom presented a stick or raised a stiff hand without a smile or indeed any sign of recognition ; one went so far as to say, " Hullo, Kennedy ! " and one eager

conversationalist went so far as to say, "Out for a walk?" Howard pushed on, walking lightly and rapidly, and found himself at last at Barton, one of those entirely delightful pastoral villages that push up so close to Cambridge on every side; a vague collection of quaint irregular cottages, whitewashed and thatched, with bits of green common interspersed, an old manorial farm with its byres and ricks, surrounded by a moat fringed with little pollarded elms. The plain ancient tower of the church looked gravely out over all. In the distance, over pastoral country, rose low wolds, pleasantly shaped, skirted with little hamlets, surrounded by orchards; the old untroubled necessary work of the world flows on in these fields and villages, peopled with lives hardly conscious of themselves, with no aims or theories, just toiling, multiplying, dying, existing, it would seem, merely to feed and clothe the more active part of the world. Howard loved such little interludes of silence, out in the fresh country, when the calm life of tree and herb, the delicate whisper of dry, evenly-blowing breezes, tranquillised and hushed his restless thoughts. He lost himself in a formless reverie, exercising no control over his trivial thoughts.

By four o'clock he was back, made himself some tea, put on a cap and gown, and walked out to a meeting. In a high bare room in the University offices the Committee sat. The Vice-Chancellor,

a big, grave, solid man, Master of St. Benedict's, sat in courteous state. Half a dozen dons sat round the great tables, ranged in a square. The business was mostly formal. The Vice-Chancellor read the points from a paper in his resonant voice, comments and suggestions were made, and the Secretary noted down conclusions. Howard was struck, as he often had been before, to see how the larger questions of principle passed almost unnoticed, while the smaller points, such as the wording of a notice, were eagerly and humorously debated by men of acute minds and easy speech. It was over in half an hour. Howard strolled off with one of the members, and then, returning to his rooms, wrote some letters, and looked up a lecture for the next day, till the bell rang for Hall.

Beaufort was a hospitable and sociable College, and guests often appeared at dinner. On this night Mr. Redmayne was in the chair, at the end of a long table; eight or ten dons were present. A gong was struck; an undergraduate came up and scrambled through a Latin Grace from a board which he held in his hand. The tables filled rapidly with lively young men full of talk and appetite. Howard found himself sitting next one of his colleagues, on the other side of him being an ancient crony of Mr. Redmayne's, the Dean of a neighbouring College. The talk was mainly local and personal, diverging at times into politics. It was

brisk, sensible, good-natured conversation, by no means unamusing. Mr. Redmayne was an unashamed Tory, and growled denunciations at a democratic Government, whom he credited with every political vice under the sun, depicting the Cabinet as men fishing in troubled seas with philanthropic baits to catch votes. One of the younger dons, an ardent Liberal, made a mild protest. "Ah," said Mr. Redmayne, "you are still the prey of idealistic illusions. Politics are all based, not on principles or programmes, but on the instinctive hatred of opponents." There was a laugh at this. "You may laugh," said Mr. Redmayne, "but you will find it to be true. Peace and goodwill are pretty words to play with, but it is combativeness which helps the world along; not the desire to be at peace, but the wish to maul your adversary!"

It was the talk of busy men who met together, not to discuss, but to eat, and conversed only to pass the time. But it was all good-humoured enough, and even the verbal sharpness which was employed was evidence of much mutual confidence and esteem.

Howard thought, looking down the Hall, when the meal was in full fling, what a picturesque, cheerful, lively affair it all was. The Hall was lighted only by candles in heavy silver candlesticks, which flared away all down the tables. In the dark

gallery a couple of sconces burned still and clear. The dusty rafters, the dim portraits above the panelling, the gleam of gilded cornices were a pleasant contrast to the lively talk, the brisk coming and going, the clink and clatter below. It was noisy indeed, but noisy as a healthy and friendly family party is noisy, with no turbulence. Once or twice a great shout of laughter rang out from the tables and died away. There was no sign of discipline, and yet the whole was orderly enough. The carvers carved, the waiters hurried to and fro, the swing-doors creaked as the men hurried out. It was a very business-like, very English scene, without any ceremony or parade, and yet undeniably stately and vivid.

The undergraduates finished their dinners with inconceivable rapidity, and the Hall was soon empty, save for the more ceremonious and deliberate party at the high table. Presently these adjourned in procession to the Parlour, a big room, comfortably panelled, opening off the Hall, where the same party sat round the fire at little tables, sipped a glass of port, and went on to coffee and cigarettes, while the talk became more general. Howard felt, as he had often felt before, how little attention even able and intellectual Englishmen paid to the form of their talk. There was hardly a grammatical sentence uttered, never an elaborate one; the object was, it seemed, to get the thought uttered

as quickly and unconcernedly as possible, and even the anecdotes were pared to the bone. A clock struck nine, and Mr. Redmayne rose. The party broke up, and Howard went off to his rooms.

He settled down to look over a set of compositions. But he was in a somewhat restless frame of mind to-night, and a not unpleasant mood of reflection and retrospect came over him. What an easy, full, lively existence his was! He seemed to himself to be perfectly contented. He remembered how he, the only son of rather elderly parents, had gone through Winchester with mild credit. He had never had any difficulties to contend with, he thought. He had been popular, not distinguished at anything—a fair athlete, a fair scholar, arousing no jealousies or enmities. He had been naturally temperate and self-restrained. He had drifted on to Beaufort as a Scholar, and it had been the same thing over again—no ambitions, no failures, friends in abundance. Then his father had died, and it had been so natural for him, on being elected to a Fellowship, just to carry on the same life; he had to settle to work at once, as his mother was not well off and much invalided. She had not long survived his father. He had taught, taken pupils, made a fair income. He had had no break of travel, no touch with the world; a few foreign tours in the company of an old friend had given him nothing but an emotional tincture of recollections

and associations—a touch of varnish, so to speak. Suddenly the remembrance of some of the things which Jack Sandys had said that morning came back to him; "real things" the boy had said, so lightly and yet so decisively. He wondered; had he himself ever had any touch with realities at all? He had been touched by no adversity or tragedy, he had been devastated by no disappointed ambitions, shattered by no emotions. His whole life had been perfectly under his control, and he had grown into a sort of contempt for all unbalanced people, who were run away with by their instincts or passions. It had been a very comfortable, sheltered, happy life; he was sure of that; he had enjoyed his work, his relations with others, his friendships; but had he ever come near to any fulness of living at all? Was it not, when all was said and done, a very empty affair—void of experience, guarded from suffering? "Suffering?" he hardly knew the meaning of the word. Had he ever felt or suffered or rebelled? Yes, there was one little thing. He had had a small ambition once; he had studied comparative religion very carefully at one time to illustrate some lectures, and a great idea had flashed across him. It was a big, a fruitful thought; he had surveyed that strange province of human emotion, the deepest strain of which seemed to be a disgust for mingling with life, a loathing of bodily processes and in-

stincts, which drove its votaries to a deliberate sexlessness, and set them at variance with the whole solid force of Nature, the treacherous and alluring devices by which she drove men to reproduction with an insatiable appetite; that mystical strain, which appeared at all times and in all places, a spiritual rebellion against material bondage, was not that the desperate cry of the fettered spirit? The conception of sin, by which Nature traversed her own activities and made them void—there was a great secret hidden here. He had determined to follow this up, and to disguise with characteristic caution and courtesy a daring speculation under the cloak of orthodox research.

He had begun his work in a great glow of enthusiasm; but it had been suspended time after time. He had sketched his theory out; but it lay there in one of his table-drawers, a skeleton not clothed with words. Why had he let this all drop? Why had he contented himself with the easy, sociable life? Effective though he was as a teacher, he had no real confidence in the things which he taught. They only seemed to him a device of reason for expending its energies, just as men deprived by complex life of manual labour sought to make up for the loss by the elaborate pursuit of games. He did not touch the springs of being at all. He had collapsed, he felt, into placid acquiescence; Nature had been too strong for him. He had fitted

so easily into the pleasant scheme of things, and he was doing nothing in the world but helping to prolong the delusion, just as men set painted glass in a window to shut out the raincloud and the wind. He was a conformist, he felt, in everything—in religion, intellect, life—but a sceptic underneath. Was he not perhaps missing the whole object and aim of life and experience, in a fenced fortress of quiet? The thought stung him suddenly with a kind of remorse. He was doing no part of the world's work, not sharing its emotions or passions or pains or difficulties; he was placidly at ease in Zion, in the comfortable city whose pleasures were based on the toil of those outside. That was a hateful thought! Had not the boy been right after all? Must one not somehow link one's arm with life and share its pilgrimage, even in weariness and tears?

There came a tap at the door, and one of his shyest pupils entered—a solitary youth, poor and unfriended, who was doing all he could to get a degree good enough to launch him in the world. He came to ask some advice about work. Howard entered into his case as well as he could, told him it was important that he should get certain points clear, gave him an informal lecture, distinctly and emphatically, and made a few friendly remarks. The man beamed with unexpressed gratitude.

"What solemn nonsense I have been talking!"

thought Howard to himself as the young man slipped away. "Of course he must learn all this—but what for? To get a mastership, and to retail it all over again! It's a vicious circle, this education which is in touch with nothing but the high culture of a nation which lived in ideas; while with us culture is just a plastering of rough walls —no part of the structure! Why cannot we put education in touch with life, try to show what human beings are driving at, what arrangements they are making that they may live? It is all arrangements with us—the frame for the picture, the sheath for the sword—and we leave the picture and the sword to look after themselves. What a wretched dilettante business it all is, keeping these boys practising postures in the anteroom of life! Cannot we get at the real thing, teach people to do things, fill their minds with ideas, break down the silly tradition of needless wealth and absurd success? And I must keep up all this farce, simply because I am fit for nothing else—I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed. Oh, hold your tongue, you ass!" said Howard, apostrophising his rebellious mind. "Don't you see where you are going? You can't do anything—it is all too big and strong for you. You must just let it alone."

II

RESTLESSNESS

A FEW days later the term drew to an end, and both dons and undergraduates, whose tempers had been wearing a little thin, got suddenly more genial, like guests when a visit draws to a close, and disposed to think rather better of each other.

Howard had made no plans; he did not wish to stay on at Cambridge, but he did not want to go away: he had no relations to whose houses he naturally drifted; he did not like the thought of a visit; as a rule he went off with an undergraduate or two to some lonely inn, where they fished or walked and did a little work. But just now he had a vague feeling that he wanted to be alone; that he had something to face, some reckoning to cast up, and yet he did not know what it was.

One afternoon—the spring was certainly advancing, and there was a touch of languor in the air, that heavenly languor which is so sweet a thing when one is young and hopeful, so depressing a thing when one is living on the edge of one's nervous force—he paid a call, which was not a thing he often did, on a middle-aged woman who passed for a sort of relation; she was a niece of his aunt's deceased

husband, Monica Graves by name. She was a woman of independent means, who had done some educational work for a time, but had now retired, lived in her own little house, and occupied herself with social schemes of various sorts. She was a year or two older than Howard. They did not very often meet, but there was a pleasant camaraderie between them, an almost brotherly and sisterly relation. She was a small, quiet, able woman, whose tranquil manner concealed great clear-headedness and decisiveness. Howard always said that it was a comfort to talk to her, because she always knew what her own opinion was, and did what she intended to do. He found her alone and at tea. She welcomed him drily but warmly. Presently he said, "I want your advice, Monnie; I want you to make up my mind for me. I have a feeling that I need a change. I don't mean a little change, but a big one. I am suddenly aware that I am a little stale, and I wish to be freshened up."

Monica looked at him and said, "Yes, I expect you are right! You know I think we ought all to have one big change in our lives, about your age, I mean. Why don't you put in for a head-mastership? I have often thought you have rather a gift that way."

"I might do that," said Howard vaguely, "but I don't want a change of work so much as a change of mind. I have got suddenly bored, and I am

a little vexed with myself. I have always rather held with William Morris that people ought to live in the same place and do the same things; and I had no intention of being bored—I have always thought that very feeble! But I have fallen suddenly into the frame of mind of knowing exactly what all my friends here are going to say and think, and that rather takes the edge off conversation; and I have learned the undergraduate mind too. It's an inconsequent thing, but there's a law in inconsequence, and I seem to have acquired a knowledge of their tangents."

"I must consider," said Monica with a smile, "but one can't do these things offhand—that is worse than doing nothing. I'll tell you what to do *now*. Why not go and stay with Aunt Anne? She would like to see you, I know, and I have always thought it rather lazy of you not to go there—she is rather a remarkable woman, and it's a pretty country. Have you ever been there?"

"No," said Howard, "not to Windlow; I stayed with them once when I was a boy, when Uncle John was alive—but that was at Bristol. What sort of a place is Windlow? I suppose Aunt Anne is pretty well off?"

"I'm not very good at seeing the points of a place," said Monica; "but it's a beautiful old house, though it is rather too low down for my taste; and she lives very comfortably, so I think she must

be rich; I don't know about that; but she is an interesting woman—one of the few really religious people I know. I am not very religious myself, but she makes it seem rather interesting to me—she has experiences—I don't quite know what they are; but she is a sort of artist in religion, I think. That's a bad description, because it sounds self-conscious; and she isn't that—she has a sense of humour, and she doesn't rub things in. You know how if one meets a real artist in anything—a writer, a painter, a musician—and finds them at work, it seems almost the only thing worth doing. Well, Aunt Anne gives me the same sort of sense about religion when I am with her; and yet when I come away, and see how badly other people handle it, it seems a very dull business."

"That's interesting," said Howard musingly; "but I am really ashamed to suggest going there. She has asked me so often, and I have sent such idiotic excuses."

"Oh, you needn't mind that," said Monica; "she isn't a huffy person. I know she would like to see you—she said to me once that the idea of coming didn't seem to amuse you, but she seemed disposed to sympathise with you for that. Just write and say you would like to go."

"I think I will," said Howard, "and I have another reason why I should like to go. You know Jack Sandys, your cousin, now my pupil. He is

rather a fascinating youth. His father is parson there, isn't he ? "

" Yes," said Monica ; " there are two hamlets, Windlow and Windlow Malzoy, both in the same parish. The church and vicarage are at Malzoy ; but Frank is rather a terror—my word, how that man talks ! But I like Jack, though I have only seen him half a dozen times—that reminds me that I must have him to dinner or something—and I like his sister even better. But I am afraid that Jack may turn out a bore too—he is rather charming at present, because he says whatever comes into his head ; and it's all quite fresh ; but that is what poor Cousin Frank does—only it's not at all fresh ! However, there's nothing like living with a bore to teach one the merits of holding one's tongue. Poor old Frank ! I thought he would be the death of us all one evening at Windlow. He simply couldn't stop, and he had a pathetic look in his eye, as if he was saying, " Can't anyone assist me to hold my tongue ? "

Howard laughed and got up. " Well," he said, " I'll take your advice. I don't know anyone like you, Monnie, for making up one's mind. You crystallise things. I shall like to see Aunt Anne, and I shall like to see Jack at home ; and meanwhile will you think the matter over, and give me a lead ? I don't want to leave Cambridge at all, but I would rather do that than go sour, as some people do ! "

"Yes," said Monica, "when you get beneath the surface, Cambridge is rather a sad place. There are a good many disappointed men here—people who wake up suddenly in middle life, and realise that if they had gone out into the world they would have done better; but I like Cambridge; you can do as you like here—and then the rainfall is low."

Howard went back to his rooms and wrote a short note to Mrs. Graves to suggest a visit; he added that he felt ashamed of himself for never coming, "but Monica says that you would like to see me, and Monica is generally right."

That evening Jack came in to say good-bye. He did not look forwards to the vacation at all, he said; "Windlow is simply the limit! I believe it's the dullest place in the kingdom!"

"What would you feel if I told you that we shall probably meet?" said Howard. "I am going to stay with Mrs. Graves—that is, if she will have me. I don't mind saying that the fact that you are close by is a considerable reason why I think of going."

"That's simply splendid!" said Jack; "we will have no end of a time. Do you *do* anything in particular—fish, I mean, or shoot? There's some wretched fishing in the river, and there is some rabbit-shooting on the downs. Mrs. Graves has a keeper, a shabby old man who shoots, as they say, for the house. I believe she objects to shooting; but you might persuade her, and we could go out together."

"Yes," said Howard, "I do shoot and fish in a feeble way. We will see what can be done."

"There are things to see, I believe," said Jack, "churches and houses, if you like that sort of thing —I don't; but we might get up some expeditions —they are rather fun. I think you won't mind my sister. She isn't bad for a woman. But women don't understand men. They are always sympathising with you or praising you. They think that is what men like, but it only means that it is what they would like. Men like to be left alone—but I daresay she thinks I don't understand her. Then there's my father! He is quite a good sort, really; but by George, how he does talk! I often think I'd like to turn him loose in the Combination Room. No one would have a chance. Redmayne simply wouldn't be in it with my father. I've invented rather a good game when he gets off. I try to see how many I can count before I am expected to make a remark. I have never quite got up to a thousand, but once I nearly let the cat out by saying nine hundred and fifty, nine hundred and fifty-one, when my father stopped for breath. He gave me a look, I can tell you, but I don't think he saw what I was after. Maud was seized with hysterics. But he isn't a bad sort of parent, as they go; he fusses, but he lets one do as one wants. I suppose I oughtn't to give my people away; but I never can see why one shouldn't talk about one's people

just as if they were anybody else. I don't think I hold things sacred, as the Dean says : ' Reticence, reticence, the true characteristic of the English gentleman and the sincere Christian ! ' " and Jack delivered himself of some paragraphs of the Dean's famous annual sermon to freshmen.

" It's abominable, the way you talk," said Howard ; " you will corrupt my ingenuous mind. How shall I meet your father if you talk like this about him ? "

" You'll have to join in my game," said Jack. " By George, what sport ; we shall sit there counting away alternately, and we will have some money on the run. You have got to say all the figures quite distinctly to yourself, you know ! "

Presently Jack said, " Why shouldn't we go down together ? No, I suppose you would want to go first ? I can't run to that. But you must come as soon as you can, and stay as long as you can. I had half promised to go and stay a week with Travers. But now I won't. By George, there isn't another don I would pay that compliment to ! It would simply freeze my blood if the Master turned up there. I shouldn't dare to show my face outside the house ; that man does make me sweat ! The very smell of his silk gown makes me feel faint."

" I'll tell you what I will do," said Howard, " I'll give you some coaching in the mornings. If anyone ever wanted coaching, it is you ! "

Jack looked rather blue at this, but he said, "It will have to be gratis, though! I haven't a cent. Besides, I am going to do better. I have a growing sense of duty!"

"It's not growing very *fast!*" said Howard, "and it's a feeble motive at best, you will find; you will have to get a better reason than that—it won't carry you far. Why not do it to please me?"

"All right," said Jack; "will you scribble me a list of books to take down? I had meant to have a rest; but I would do a good deal of work to get a reasonable person down at Windlow. I simply daren't ask my friends there; my father would talk their hindlegs off; but he isn't a bad old bird."

III

WINDLOW

Mrs. Graves wrote back by return of post that she was delighted to think that Howard was coming. "I am getting an old woman," she said, "and fond of memories: and what I hear of you from your enthusiastic pupil Jack makes me wish to see my nephew, and proud of him too. This is a quiet house, but I think you would enjoy it; and it's a real kindness to me to come. I am sure I shall like you, and I am not without hopes that you may like me. You need not tie yourself down to any dates; just come when you can, and go when you must."

Howard liked the simplicity of the letter, and determined to go down at once. He started two days later. It was a fine spring day, and it was pleasant to glide through the open country all quickening into green. He arrived in the afternoon at the little wayside station. It was in the south-east corner of Somersetshire, and Howard liked the look of the landscape, the steep green downs, with their wooded dingles breaking down into rich undulating plains, dappled with hedgerow trees and traversed by gliding streams. He was met at the station by an old-fashioned waggonette, with an

elderly coachman, who said that Mrs. Graves had hoped to come herself, but was not very well, and thought that Mr. Kennedy would prefer an open carriage.

Howard was astonished at the charm of the whole countryside. They passed through several hamlets, with beautiful old houses, built of a soft orange stone, weathering to a silvery grey, with evidences of careful and pretty design in their mullioned windows and arched doorways. The churches, with their great richly carved towers, pierced stone shutters, and clustered pinnacles, pleased him extremely, and he liked the simple and courteous greetings of the people who passed them. He had a sense, long unfamiliar to him, as though he were somehow coming home. The road entered a green valley among the downs. To the left, an outstanding bluff was crowned with the steep turfed bastions of an ancient fort, and as they went in among the hills, the slopes grew steeper, rich with hanging woods and copses, and the edges of the high thickets were white with bleached flints. At last they passed into a hamlet with a church, and a big vicarage among shrubberies ; this was Windlow Malzoy, the coachman said, and that was Mr. Sandys' house. Howard saw a girl wandering about on the lawn—Jack's sister, he supposed, but it was too far off for him to see her distinctly ; five minutes later they drove into Windlow. It lay at the very

bottom of the valley; a clear stream ran beneath the bridge. There were but half a dozen cottages, and just ahead of them, abutting on the road, appeared the front of a beautiful simple house of some considerable size, with a large embowered garden behind it bordering on the river; Howard was astonished to see what a large and ancient building it was. The part on the road was blank of windows, with the exception of a dignified projecting oriel; close to which was a high Tudor archway, with big oak doors standing open. There were some plants growing on the coping—snapdragon and valerian—which gave it a look of age and settled use. The carriage drove in under the arch, and a small court-yard appeared. There was a stable on the right, with a leaded cupola; the house itself was very plain and stately, with two great traceried windows which seemed to belong to a hall, and a finely carved outstanding porch. The whole was built out of the same orange stone of which the churches were built, stone-tiled, all entirely homelike and solid.

He got down at the door, which stood open. An old man-servant appeared, and he found himself in a flagged passage, with a plain wooden screen on his left, opening into the hall. It had a collegiate air which he liked. Then he was led out at the opposite end of the vestibule, the servant saying, "Mrs. Graves is in the garden, sir." He stepped

out on to a lawn bordered with trees; opposite him was a stone-built Jacobean garden-house, with stone balls on the balustraded coping. Two ladies were walking on the gravel path; the older of the two, who walked with a stick, came up to him, put her hand on his shoulder, and gave him a kiss in a simple and motherly way, saying, "So here you actually are, my dear boy, and very much welcome." She then presented the other lady, a small, snub-nosed, middle-aged woman, saying, "This is Miss Merry, who lives with me, and keeps me more or less in order; she is quite excited at meeting a don; she has a respect for learning and talent, which is unhappily rare nowadays." Miss Merry shook hands as a spaniel might give its paw, and looked reverentially at Howard. His aunt put her hand through his arm, and said, "Let us walk about a little. I live by rule, you must know—that is, by Miss Merry's rule; and we shall have tea in a few minutes."

She pointed out one or two of the features of the house, and said, in answer to Howard's loudly expressed admiration, "Yes, it is a nice old house. Your uncle had a great taste for such things in days when people did not care much about them. He bought this very cheap, I believe, and was much attached to it; but he did not live long to enjoy it, you know. He died nearly thirty years ago. I meant to sell it, but somehow I did not, and now

I hope to end my days here. It is not nearly as big as it looks, and a good deal of it consists of unused granaries and farm buildings. I sometimes think it is selfish of me to go on occupying it—it's a house that wants *children;* but one isn't very consistent; and somehow the house is used to me, and I to it; and, after all, it is only waiting, which isn't the worst thing in the world!"

When Howard found an opportunity of scrutinising his aunt, which he did as she poured out tea, he saw a very charming old lady, who was not exactly handsome, but was fresh-coloured and silvery-haired, and had a look of the most entire tranquillity and self-possession. She looked as if she had met and faced trouble at some bygone time; there were traces of sorrow about the brow and eyes, but it was a face which seemed as if self had somehow passed out of it, and was yet strong with a peculiar kind of fearless strength. She had a lazy and contented sort of laugh, and yet gave an impression of energy, and of a very real and vivid life. Her eyes had a great softness and brilliancy, and Howard liked to feel them dwelling upon him. As they sat at tea she suddenly put her hand on his and said, "My dear boy, how you remind me of your mother! I suppose you hardly even remember her as a young woman; but though you are half hidden in that beard of yours, you are somehow just like her, and I feel as if I were in the schoolroom

again at Hunsdon in the old days. No, I am not sentimental. I don't want it back again, and I don't hate the death that parts us. One can't go back, one must go forward—and, after all, hearts were made to love with, and not to break!"

They spent a quiet evening in the still house. Mrs. Graves said to Howard, "I know that men always want to go and do something mysterious after tea; but to-night you must just sit here and get used to me. You needn't be afraid of having to see too much of me. I don't appear before luncheon, and Jane looks after me; and you must get some exercise in the afternoons. I don't go further than the village. I expect you have lectures to write; and you must do exactly what you like." They sat there, in the low panelled room, and talked easily about old recollections. They dined in simple state in the big hall with its little gallery, at a round table in the centre, lighted by candles. The food was simple, the wine was good.

"Marengo chicken," said Mrs. Graves as a dish was handed round. "That's one of Jane's historical allusions. If you don't know why it is called Marengo, Jane will rejoice to enlighten you." After the meal she begged him to smoke. "I like it," said Mrs. Graves; "I have even smoked myself in seclusion, but now I dare not—it would be all over the parish to-morrow."

After dinner they went back to the drawing-room, and Miss Merry turned out to be quite a good pianist, playing some soft old music at the end of the gently lighted room. Mrs. Graves went off early. "You had better stop and smoke here," she said to Howard. "There's a library where you can work and smoke to-morrow; and now good night, and let me say how I delight to have you here—I really can't say how much!"

Howard sat alone in the drawing-room. He had an almost painful faculty of minute observation, and the storage of new impressions was a real strain to him. To-day it seemed that they had poured in upon him in a cataract, and he felt dangerously wakeful; why had he been such a fool as to have missed this beautiful house, and this home atmosphere of affection? He could not say. A stupid persistence in his own plans, he supposed. Yet this had been waiting for him, a home such as he had never owned. He thought with an almost terrified disgust of his rooms at Beaufort, as the logs burned whisperingly in the grate, and the smoke of his cigarette rose on the air. Was it not this that he had been needing all along? At last he rose, put out the candles, and made his way to the big panelled bedroom which had been given him. He lay long awake, wondering, in a luxurious repose, listening to the whisper of the breeze in the shrubberies, and the faint murmur of the water in the full-fed stream.

IV

THE POOL

VERY early in the morning Howard woke to hear the faint twittering of the birds begin in bush and ivy. It was at first just a fitful, drowsy chirp, a call "are you there? are you there?" until, when all the sparrows were in full cry, a thrush struck boldly in, like a solo marching out above a humming accompaniment of strings. That was a delicious hour, when the mind, still unsated of sleep, played softly with happy, homelike thoughts. He slept again, but the sweet mood lasted; his breakfast was served to him in solitude in a little panelled parlour off the Hall; and in the fresh April morning, with the sunlight lying on the lawn and lighting up the old worn detail of the carved cornices, he recovered for a time the boyish sense of ecstasy of the first morning at home after the return from school. While he was breakfasting, a scribbled note from Jack was brought in.

"Just heard you arrived last night; it's an awful bore, but I have to go away to-day—an old engagement made, I need hardly say, *for* me and not *by* me; I shall turn up to-morrow about this time.

No *work*, I think. A day of calm resolution and looking forward manfully to the future! My father and sister are going to dine at the Manor to-night. I shall be awfully interested to hear what you think of them. He has been looking up some things to talk about, and I can tell you, you'll have a dose. Maud is frightened to death.—Yours

JACK.

"*P.S.*—I advise you to begin *counting* at once."

A little later, Miss Merry turned up, to ask Howard if he would care to look round the house. "Mrs. Graves would like," she said, "to show it you herself, but she is easily tired, and can't stand about much." They went round together, and Howard was surprised to find that it was not nearly as large a house as it looked. Much space was agreeably wasted in corridors and passages, and there were huge attics with great timbered supports, needed to sustain the heavy stone tiling, which had never been converted into living rooms. There was the hall, which took up a considerable part of one side; out of this, towards the road, opened the little parlour where he had breakfasted, and above it was a library full of books, with its oriel overhanging the road, and two windows looking into the garden. Then there was the big drawing-room. Upstairs there were but a half a dozen bedrooms. The offices and the servants' bedrooms were in the

wing on the road. There was but little furniture in the house. Mr. Graves had had a preference for large bare rooms; and such furniture as there was, was all for use and not for ornament, so that there was a refreshing lack of any æsthetic pose about it. There were but few pictures, but most of the rooms were panelled and needed no other ornament. There was a refreshing sense of space everywhere, and Howard thought that he had never seen a house he liked so well. Miss Merry chirped away, retailing little bits of history. Howard now for the first time learned that Mr. Graves had retired early from business with a considerable fortune, and being fond of books and leisure, and rather delicate in health, had established himself in the house, which had taken his fancy. There were some fifteen hundred acres of land attached, divided up into several small farms.

Miss Merry was filled with a reverential sort of adoration of Mrs. Graves; "the most wonderful person, I assure you! I always feel she is rather thrown away in this remote place."

"But she likes it?" said Howard.

"Yes, she likes everything," said Miss Merry. "She makes everyone feel happy: she says very little, but you feel somehow that all is right if she is there. It's a great privilege, Mr. Kennedy, to be with her; I feel that more and more every day."

This artless praise pleased Howard. When he was left alone he got out his papers; but he found himself restless in a pleasant way; he strolled through the garden. It was a singular place, of great extent; the lawn was carefully kept, but behind the screen of shrubs the garden extended far up the valley beside the river in a sort of wilderness; and he could see by the clumps of trees and the grassy mounds that it must have once been a great formal pleasaunce, which had been allowed to follow its own devices; at the far end of it, beside the stream, there was a long flagged terrace, with a stone balustrade looking down upon the stream, and beyond that the woods closed in. He left the garden and followed the stream up the valley; the downs here drew in and became steeper, till he came at last to one of the most lovely places he thought he had ever set eyes upon. The stream ended suddenly in a great clear pool, among a clump of old sycamores; the water rose brimming out of the earth, and he could see the sand fountains rising and falling at the bottom of the basin; by the side of it was a broad stone seat, with carved back and ends. There was not a house in sight; beyond there was only the green valley-end running up into the down, which was here densely covered with thickets. It was perfectly still; and the only sound was the liquid springing of the water in the pool, and the birds singing in the bushes.

Howard had a sudden sense that the place held a significance for him. Had he been there before, in some dream or vision? He could not tell; but it was strangely familiar to him. Even so the trees had leaned together, and the clear ripples pulsed upon the bank. Something strange and beautiful had befallen him there. What was it? The mind could not unravel the secret.

He sat there long in the sun, his eyes fixed upon the pool, in a blissful content that was beyond thought. Then he slowly retraced his steps, full of an intense inner happiness.

He found his aunt in the garden, sitting out in the sun. He bent down to kiss her, and she detained his hand for a moment. "So you are at home?" she said, "and happy?—that is what I had wished and hoped. You have been to the pool —yes, that is a lovely spot. It was that, I think, which made your uncle buy the place; he had a great love of water—and in my unhappy days here, when I had lost him, I used often to go there and wish things were otherwise. But that is all over now!"

After luncheon, Miss Merry excused herself and said she was going to the village to see a farm-labourer's wife, who had lost a child and was in great distress. "Poor soul!" said Mrs. Graves. "Give her my love, and ask her to come and see me as soon as she can." Presently as they sat

together, Howard smoking, she asked him something about his work. "Will you tell me what you are doing?" she said. "I daresay I should not understand, but I like to know what people are thinking about—don't use technical terms, but just explain your idea!"

Howard was just in the frame of mind, trying to revive an old train of thought, in which it is a great help to make a statement of the range of a subject; he said so, and began to explain very simply what was in his mind, the essential unity of all religion, and his attempt to disentangle the central motive from outlying schemes and dogmas. Mrs. Graves heard him attentively, every now and then asking a question, which showed that she was following the drift of his thought.

"Ah, that's very interesting and beautiful," she said at last. "May I say that it is the one thing that attracts me, though I have never followed it philosophically. Now," she went on, "I am going to reduce it all to practical terms, and I don't want to beat about the bush—there's no need for that! I want to ask you a plain question. Have you any religion or faith of your own?"

"Ah," said Howard, "who can say? I am a conformist, certainly, because I recognise in religion a fine sobering, civilising force at work, and if one must choose one's side, I want to be on that side and not on the other. But religion seems to me

in its essence a very artistic thing, a perception of effects which are hidden from many hearts and minds. When a man speaks of definite religious experience, I feel that I am in the presence of a perception of something real—as real as music and painting. But I doubt if it is a sense given to all, or indeed to many; and I don't know what it really is. And then, too, one comes across people who hold it in an ugly, or a dreary, or a combative, or a formal way; and then sometimes it seems to me almost an evil thing."

"Yes," said Mrs. Graves, "I understand that. May I give you an instance, and you will see if I perceive your thought. The good Vicar here, my cousin Frank, Jack's father—you will meet him to-night—is a man who holds a rigid belief, or thinks he holds it. He preaches what he calls the sinew and bone of doctrine, and he is very stern in the pulpit. He likes lecturing people in rows! But in reality he is one of the kindest and vaguest of men. He preached a stiff sermon about conversion the other day—I am pretty sure he did not understand it himself—and he disquieted one of my good maids so much that she went to him and asked what she could do to get assurance. He seems to have hummed and hawed, and then to have said that she need not trouble her head about it—that she was a good girl, and had better be content with doing her duty. He is the friendliest of men, and that is his real

religion ; he hasn't an idea how to apply his system, which he learned at a theological college, but he feels it his duty to preach it."

" Yes," said Howard, " that is just what I mean ; but there must be some explanation for this curious outburst of forms and doctrines, so contradictory in the different sects. Something surely causes both the form of religion and the force of it ? "

" Yes," said Mrs. Graves, " just as in an engine something causes both the steam and the piston-rod ; it's an intelligence somewhere that fits the one to the other. But then, as you say, what is the cause of all this extravagance and violence of expression ? "

" That is the human element," said Howard— " the cautious, conservative, business-like side that can't bear to let anything go. All religion begins, it seems to me, by an outburst of moral force, an attempt to simplify, to get a principle ; and then the people who don't understand it begin to make it technical and defined ; uncritical minds begin to attribute all sorts of vague wonders to it—things unattested, natural exaggerations, excited statements, impossible claims ; and then these take traditional shape and the poor steed gets hung with all sorts of incongruous burdens."

" Yes," said Mrs. Graves, " but the force is there all the time ; the old hard words, like regeneration and atonement, do not mean *definite* things—that

is the mischief; they are the receipts made up by stupid, hard-headed people who do not understand; but they stand for large and wonderful experiences, and are like the language of children telling their dreams. The moral genius who sees through it all and gives the first impulse is trying to deal with life directly and frankly; and the difficulty arises from people who see the attendant circumstances and mistake them for the causes. But I do not see it from that side, of course! I understand what you are aiming at. You are trying to disentangle all the phenomena, are you not, and referring them to their real causes, instead of lumping them all together as the phenomena of religion?"

"Yes," said Howard, "that is what I am doing. I suppose I am naturally sceptical; but I want to put aside all that stands on insecure evidence, and all the sham terminology that comes from a muddled delight in the supernatural. I want to give up and clear away all that is not certain—material things must be brought to the test of material laws—and to see what is left."

"Well," said Mrs. Graves, "now I will tell you my own very simple experience. I began, I think, with a very formal religion, and I tried in my youth to attach what was really instinctive to religious motives. It got me into a sad mess, because I did not dare to go direct to life. I used to fret because your uncle seemed so indifferent to these things.

He was a wise and good man, and lived by a sort of inner beauty of character that made all mean cruel spiteful petty things impossible to him. Then when he died, I had a terrible time to go through. I felt utterly adrift. My old system did not give me the smallest help. I was trying to find an intellectual solution. It was then that I met Miss Gordon, the great evangelist. She saw I was unhappy, and she said to me one day : ' You have no business to be unhappy like this. What you want is *strength*, and it is there all the time waiting for you ! You are arguing your case with God, complaining of the injustice you have received, trying to excuse yourself, trying to find cause to blame Him. Your life has been broken to pieces, and you are trying to shelter yourself among the fragments. You must cast them all away, and thank God for having pierced through the fortress in which you were imprisoned. You must just go straight to Him, and open your heart, as if you were opening a window to the sun and air.' She did not explain, or try to give me formulas or phrases, she simply showed me the light breaking round me.

" It came to me quite suddenly one morning in my room upstairs. I was very miserable indeed, missing my dear husband at every turn, quite unable to face life, shuddering and shrinking through the days. I threw it all aside, and spoke to God Himself. I said, ' You made me, You put me here,

You sent me love, You sent me prosperity. I have cared for the wrong things, I have loved in the wrong way. Now I throw everything else aside, and claim strength and light. I will sorrow no more and desire no more; I will take every day just what You send me, I will say and do what You bid me. I will make no pretences and no complaints. Do with me what You will.'

"I cannot tell you what happened to me, but a great tide of strength and even joy flowed into my whole being; it was the water of life, clear as crystal; and yet it was myself all the time! I was not different, but I was one with something pure and wise and loving and eternal.

"That has never left me. You will ask why I have not done more, bestirred myself more; because that is just what one cannot do. All that matters nothing. The activities which one makes for oneself, they are the delusions which hide God from us. One must not strive or rebuke or arrange; one must simply love and be. Let me tell you one thing. I was haunted all my early life with a fear of death. I liked life so well, every moment of it, every incident, that I could not bear to think it should ever cease; now, though I shrink from pain as much as ever, I have no shrinking whatever from death. It is the perfectly natural and simple change, and one is with God there as here. The soul and God—those are the two imperishable

things ; one has not either to know or to act—one has only to feel."

She ceased speaking, and sat for a moment upright in her chair. Then she went on. "Now the moment I saw you, my dear boy, I loved you—indeed I have always loved you, I think, and I have always felt that some day in His good time God would bring us together. But I see too that you have not found the strength of God. You are not at peace. Your life is full and active and kind ; you are faithful and pure ; but your self is still unbroken, like a crystal wall all round you. I think you will have to suffer ; but you will believe, will you not, that you have not seen a half of the wonder of life ? You are full of happy experience, but you have begun to feel the larger need. And I knew that when you began to feel that need, you would be brought to me, not to be given it, but to be shown it. That is all I can say to you now, but you will know the fulness of life. It is not experience, action, curiosity, ambition, desire, as many think, that is fulness of life ; those are delusions, things through which the soul has to pass, just that it may learn not to rest in them. The fulness of life is the stillest, quietest, inner joy, which nothing can trouble or shadow ; love is a part of it, but not quite all—for there is a shadow even in love ; and this is the larger peace."

Howard sat amazed at the fire and glow of the

words that came to him. He did not fully understand all that was said, but he had a sense of being brought into touch with a very tremendous and overwhelming force indeed. But he could not for the moment revise his impressions; he only perceived that he had come unexpectedly upon a calm and radiating centre of energy, and it seemed in his mind that the pool which he had seen that morning was an allegory of what he had now heard. The living water, breaking up so clearly from underground in the grassy valley, and passing downwards to gladden the earth! It would be used, be tainted, be troubled, but he saw that no soil or stain, no scattering or disruption, could ever really intrude itself into that elemental purity. The stream would reunite itself, the impregnable atom would let the staining substance fall unheeded. He would have to consider all that, scrutinise his life in a new light. He felt that he had been living on the surface of things, relying on impression, living in impression, missing the strong central current all the time. He rose, and taking his aunt's hand, kissed her cheek.

"Those are my thanks!" he said smiling. "I can't express my gratitude, but you have given me so much to think about and to ponder over that I can say no more now. I do indeed feel that I have missed what is perhaps the greatest thing in the world. But I ask myself, Can I attain to this, is it

for me? Am I not condemned by temperament to live in the surface-values?"

"No, dear child," said Mrs. Graves, looking at him, so that for an instant he felt like a child indeed at a mother's knee; "we all come home thus, sooner or later; and the time has come for you. I knew it the moment I opened your letter. He is at the gate, I said, and I may have the joy of being beside him when the door is opened."

V

ON THE DOWN

HOWARD was very singularly impressed by this talk. It seemed to him, not certainly indeed, but possibly, that he had stumbled, almost as it were by accident, upon a great current of force and emotion running vehemently through the world, under the calm surface of things. How many apparently unaccountable events it might explain! one saw frail people doing fine things, sensitive people bearing burdens of ill-health or disappointment, placidly and even contentedly, men making gallant, unexpected choices, big expansive natures doing dull work and living cheerfully under cramped conditions. He had never troubled to explain such phenomena, beyond thinking that for some reason such a course of action pleased and satisfied people. Of course everyone did not hide the struggle; there were men he knew who had a grievance against the world, for ever parading a valuation of themselves with which no one concurred. But there were many people who had the material for far worse grievances, who never seemed to nourish them. Had they fought in secret and prevailed? Had they been floated into some moving current

of strength by a rising tide ? Were they, like the man in the Gospel, conscious of a treasure hidden in a field which made all other prizes tame by comparison ? Was the Gospel in fact perhaps aiming at that—the pearl of price ? To be born again—was that what had happened ? The thought cast a light upon his own serene life, and showed him that it was essentially a pagan sort of life, temperate perhaps and refined, but still unlit by any secret fire. It was not that his life was wrong, or that an abjuration was needed ; it was still to be lived, and lived more intently, but no longer merely self-propelled. . . .

He needed to be alone, to consider, to focus his thought ; he went off for a walk by himself among the hills, past the spring, up the valley, till he came to a place where the down ran out into the plain, the bluff crowned with a great earthwork. An enormous view lay spread out before him. To left and right the smooth elbows of the uplands ran down into the plain, their skirts clothed with climbing woods and orchards, hamlets half-hidden, with the smoke going up from their chimneys ; further out the cultivated plain rose and fell, field beyond field, wood beyond wood, merging at last in a belt of deep rich colour, and beyond that, blue hills of hope and desire, and a pale gleam of sea beyond all. The westering sun filled the air with a golden haze, and enriched the land with soft rich shadows.

There was life spread out before him, just so and not otherwise, life organised and constructed into toil and a certain order, out of what dim concourse and strife! For whatever reason, it was there to be lived; one could not change the conditions of it, the sun and the rain, the winter and the spring; but behind all that definite set of forces, was there perhaps a stronger and larger force still, a brimming tide of energy, that clasped life close and loved it, and yet regarded something through it and beyond it that was not yet? His heart seemed full of a great longing, not to avoid life, but to return and live it in a larger way, at once more engaged in it, and more detached from it, each quality ministering to the other. It seemed to him that afternoon that there was something awaiting him greater than anything which had yet befallen him—an open door, through which he might pass to see strange things.

VI

THE HOME CIRCLE

He returned somewhat late, to find tea over and Mrs. Graves gone to her room; but there was tea waiting for him in the library; he went there, and for a while turned over his book, which seemed to him now to be illumined with a new light. It was this that he had been looking for, this gift of power; it was that which lay behind his speculations; he had suspected it, inferred it, but not perceived it; he saw now whither his thought had been conducting him, and why he had flagged in the pursuit.

He went up to dress for dinner, and came down as soon as the bell rang. He found that Jack's father and sister had arrived. He went into the dimly lighted room. Mr. Sandys, a fine-looking robust man, clean-shaven, curly-haired, carefully and clerically dressed, was standing by Mrs. Graves; he came forward and shook hands, "I am delighted to make your acquaintance, Mr. Kennedy," he said, "though indeed I seem to know a great deal about you from Jack. You are quite a hero of his, you know, and I want to thank you for all your kindness to him. I am looking forward to having

a good talk with you about his future. By the way, here is my daughter, Maud, who is quite as anxious to see you as I am." A figure sitting in a corner, talking to Miss Merry, rose up, came forward into the light, and held out her hand with rather a shy smile.

Howard was amazed at what he saw. Maud had an extraordinary likeness to her brother, but with what a difference! Howard saw in an instant what it was that had haunted him in the aspect of Jack. This was what he seemed to have discerned all the time, and what had been baffling him. He knew that she was nineteen, but she looked younger. She was not, he thought, exactly beautiful—but how much more than beautiful; she was very finely and delicately made, and moved with an extraordinary grace; pale and fair, but with a look of perfect health; her features were very small, and softly rather than finely moulded; she had the air of some flower—a lily he thought—which was emphasised by her simple white dress. The under-lip was a little drawn in, which gave the least touch of melancholy to the face; but she had clear blue trustful eyes, the expression of which moved him in a very singular manner, because they seemed to offer a sweet and frank confidence. Her self-possession gave the least little sense of effort. He took the small firm and delicate hand in his, and was conscious of something strong and resolute in

the grasp of the tiny fingers. She murmured something about Jack being so sorry to be away; and Howard to recover himself said: "Yes, he wrote to me to explain—we are going to do some work together, I believe."

"Yes, it's most kind of you," said Mr. Sandys, putting his arm within his daughter's with a pleasant air of fatherliness. "I am afraid industry isn't Jack's strong point? Of course I am anxious about his future—you must be used to that sort of thing! but we will defer all this until after dinner, when Mrs. Graves will allow us to have a good talk."

"We will see," said Mrs. Graves, rising; "Howard is here for a holiday, you know. Howard, will you lead the way; you don't know how my ceremonial soul enjoys having a real host to preside!"

Maud took Howard's arm, and the touch gave him a quite unreasonable thrill of pleasure; but he felt too quite insupportably elderly. What could he find to talk to this enchanting child about? He wished he had learned more about her tastes and ideas. Was this the creature of whom Jack had talked so patronisingly? He felt almost angry with his absent pupil for not having prepared him for what he would meet.

As soon as they were seated Mr. Sandys launched into the talk, like an eagle dallying with the wind. He struck Howard as an extremely good-natured,

sensible, buoyant man, with a perpetual flow of healthy interests. Nothing that he said had the slightest distinction, and his power of expression was quite unequal to the evident vividness of his impressions. He had a taste for antithesis, but no grasp of synonyms. Every idea in Mr. Sandys' mind fell into halves, but the second clause was produced, not to express any new thought, but rather to echo the previous clause. He began at once on University topics. He had himself been a Pembroke man, and it had cost him an effort, he said, to send Jack elsewhere. "I don't take quite the orthodox view of education," he said, "in fact I am decidedly heterodox about its aims and the object that it has. It ought not to fall behind its object, and all this specialisation seems to me to be dangerous, and in fact decidedly perilous. My own education was on the old classical lines—an excellent gymnastic, I think, and distinctly fortifying. The old masterpieces, you know, Thucydides and so forth—they should be the basis—the foundation so to speak. But we must not forget the superstructure, the house of thought, if I may use the expression. You must forgive my ventilating these crude ideas, Mr. Kennedy. I went in myself, after taking my degree, for a course of general reading. Goethe and Schiller, you know. Yes, how fine that all is, though I sometimes feel it is a little Teutonic? One needs to correct the Teutonic bias, and it is

just there that the gymnastic of the classics comes in; it gives one a standard—a criterion in fact. One must have a criterion, mustn't one, or it is all loose, and indeed, so to speak, illusive? I am all for formative education; and it is there that women—I speak frankly in the presence of three intelligent women—it is there that they suffer. Their education is not formative enough—not formal enough, in fact! Now, I have tried with dear Maud to communicate just that touch of formality. You would be surprised, Mr. Kennedy, to know what Maud has read under my guidance. Not learned, you know—I don't care for that—but with a standard, or if I may revert to my former expression, a criterion."

He paused for a moment, saw that he was belated, and finished his soup hastily.

"Yes," said Howard, "of course that is the real problem of education—to give a standard, and not to extinguish the taste for intellectual things, which is too often what we contrive to do."

"Now we must not be too serious all at once," said Mrs. Graves. "If we exhaust ourselves about education, we shall have nothing to fall back upon —we shall be afraid to condescend. I am deplorably ill-educated myself. I have no standard whatever. I have to consult dear Jane, have I not? Jane is my intellectual touchstone, and saves me from entire collapse."

"Well, well," said Mr. Sandys good-humouredly, "Mr. Kennedy and I will fight it out together sometime. He will forgive an old Pembroke man for wanting to know what is going forward; for scenting the battle afar off, in fact."

Mr. Sandys found no lack of subjects to descant upon; but voluble, and indeed absurd as he was, Howard could not help liking him; he was a good fellow, he could see, and managed to diffuse a geniality over the scene. "I am interested in most things," he said, at the end of a breathless harangue, "and there is something in the presence of a real live student, from the forefront of the intellectual battle, which rouses all my old activities—stimulates them, in fact. This will be a memorable evening for me, Mr. Kennedy, and I have abundance of things to ask you." He did indeed ask a good many things, but he was content to answer them himself. Once indeed, in the course of an immense tirade, in which Mr. Sandys' intellectual curiosity took a series of ever-widening sweeps, Howard caught his neighbour regarding him with a half-amused look, and became aware that she was wondering if he were playing Jack's game. Their eyes met, and he knew that she knew that he knew. He smiled and shook his head. She gave him a delighted little smile, and Howard had that touch of absurd ecstasy, which visits men no longer young, when they find themselves still in the friendly

camp of the young, and not in the hostile camp of the middle-aged.

Presently he said to her something about Jack, and how much he enjoyed seeing him at Cambridge. "He is really rather a wonderful person," he added. "There isn't anyone at Beaufort who has such a perfectly defined relation to everyone in the college, from the master down to the kitchen-boys. He talks to everyone without any embarrassment, and yet no one really knows what he is thinking! He is very deep, really, and I think he has a fine future before him."

Maud lighted up at this, and said: "Do you really think so?" and added, "You know how much he admires you?"

"I am glad to be assured of it," said Howard; "you would hardly guess it from some of the things he says to me. It's awful, but he can't be checked—and yet he never oversteps the line, somehow."

"He's a queer boy," said Maud. "The way he talked to the Archdeacon the other day was simply fearful; but the Archdeacon only laughed, and said to papa afterwards that he envied him his son. The Archdeacon was giggling half the afternoon; he felt quite youthful, he said."

"It's the greatest gift to be able to do that," said Howard; "it's a sort of fairy wand—the pumpkin becomes a coach and four."

"Jack's right ear must be burning, I think," said

Maud, " and yet he never seems to want to know what anyone thinks about him."

That was all the talk that Howard had with her at dinner. After the ladies had gone, Mr. Sandys became very confidential about Jack's prospects.

" I look upon you as a sort of relation, you see," he said, " in fact I shall make bold to drop the Mr. and I hope you will do the same ? May we indeed take a bold step into intimacy and be ' Howard ' and ' Frank ' henceforth ? I can't, of course, leave Jack a fortune, but when I die the two dear children will be pretty well off—I may say that. What do you think he had better go in for ? I should like him to take holy orders, but I don't press it. It brings one into touch with human beings, and I like that. I find human beings very interesting —I am not afraid of responsibility."

Howard said that he did not think Jack inclined to orders.

" Then I put that aside," cried the good-natured Mr. Sandys. " No compulsion for me—the children may do as they like, live as they like, marry whom they like. I don't believe in checking human nature. Of course if Jack could get a Fellowship, I should like him to settle down at Cambridge. There's a life for you ! In the forefront of the intellectual battle ! It is what I should have liked myself, of all things. To hear what is going on in the intellectual line, to ventilate ideas, to write,

to teach—that's a fine life—to be able to hold one's own in talk and discussion—that's where we country people fail. I have plenty of ideas, you know, myself, but I can't put them into shape, into form, so to speak."

"I think Jack would rather like a commercial career," said Howard. "It's the only thing he has ever mentioned; and I am sure he might do well if he could get an opening; he likes real things, he says."

"He does!" said Mr. Sandys enthusiastically—"that's what he always says. Do you know, if you won't think me very vain, Howard, I believe he gets that from me. Maud is different—she takes after her dear mother—whose loss was so irreparable a calamity—my dear wife was full of imagination; it was a beautiful mind. I will show you some of her sketches when you come to see us—I am looking forward to that—not much technique, perhaps, but a real instinct for beauty; to be just, a little lacking in form, but full of feeling. Well, Jack, as I was saying, likes reality. So do I! A firm hold on reality—that's the best thing; I was not intellectual enough for the life of thought, and I fell back on humanity—vastly engrossing! I assure you, though you would hardly think it, that even these simple people down here are most interesting: no two of them alike. My old friends say to me sometimes that I must find country people very dull,

but I always say, 'No two of them alike!' Of course I try to keep my intellectual tastes alive—they are only tastes, of course, not faculties, like yours—but we read and talk and ventilate our ideas, Maud and I; and when we are tired of books, why I fall back on the great book of humanity. We don't stagnate—at least I hope not—I have a horror of stagnation. I said so to the Archdeacon the other day, and he said that there was nothing stagnant about Windlow."

"No, I am quite sure there is not," said Howard politely.

"It's very good of you to say so, Howard," said Mr. Sandys delighted. "Really quite a compliment! And I assure you, you don't know what a pleasure it is to have a talk like this with a man like yourself, so well-read, so full of ideas. I envy Jack his privileges. I do indeed. Now dear old Pembroke was not like that in my days. There was no one I could talk to, as Jack tells me he talks to you. A man like yourself is a vast improvement on the old type of don, if I may say so. I'm very free, you see! And so you think Jack might do well in commerce? Well, I quite approve. All I want is that he should not be out of touch with human beings. I'm not a metaphysician, but it seems to me that that is what we are here for—touch with humanity—of course on Church of England lines. I'm tolerant, I hope, and can see

the good side of other creeds; but give me something comprehensive, and that is the glory of our English Church. Well, you have given me a lot to think of, Howard; I must just take it all away and think it over. It's well to do that, I think? Not to be in a hurry, try to see all round a question? That is my line always!"

They walked into the drawing-room together; and Howard felt curiously drawn to the warm-hearted and voluble man. Perhaps it was for the sake of his children, he thought. There must be something fine about a man who had brought up two such children—but that was not all; the Vicar was enthusiastic; he revelled in life, he adored life; and Howard felt that there was a real fund of sense and even judgment somewhere, behind the spray of the cataract. He was a man whom one could trust, he believed, and whom it was impossible not to like.

When they reached the drawing-room, Mrs. Graves called the Vicar into a corner, and began to talk to him about someone in the village; Howard heard his talk plunge steadily into the silence. Miss Merry flitted about, played a few pieces of music; and Howard found himself left to Maud. He went and sate down beside her. In the dim light the girl sate forward in a big arm-chair; there was nothing languorous or listless about her. She seemed all alert in a quiet way. She greeted him with a

smile, and sate turned towards him, her chin on her hand, her eyes upon him. Her shining hair fell over the curves of her young and pure neck. She was holding a flower, which Mrs. Graves had given her, in her other hand, and its fragrance exhaled all about her. Once or twice she checked him with a little gesture of her hand, when Miss Merry began to play, and he could see that she was much affected by the music.

"It seems to me so wrong to talk during music," she said; "perhaps it wasn't polite of me to stop you, but I can't bear to interrupt music—it's like treading on flowers—it can't come again just like that!"

"Yes," said Howard, "I know exactly what you mean; but I expect it is a mistake to think of a beautiful thing being wasted, if we don't happen to hear or see it. It isn't only meant for us. It is the light or the sound or the flower, I think, being beautiful because it is glad."

"Yes," said the girl, "perhaps it is that. That is what Mrs. Graves thinks. Do you know, it seems to me strange that you have never been here before, though you are almost her only relation. She is the most wonderful person I have ever seen. The only person I know who seems always right, and yet never wants anyone else to know she is right."

"Yes," said Howard, "I feel that I have been very foolish—but it has been going on all the time, like the music and the light. It hasn't been wasted.

I have had a wonderful talk with her to-day—the most wonderful talk, I think, I have ever had. I can't understand it all yet—but she has given me the sense of some fine purpose—as if I had been kept away for a purpose, because I was not ready; and as if I had come here for a purpose now."

The girl sate looking at him with open eyes, and with some strange sense of surprise. "Yes," she said, "it is just like that; but that you could have seen it so soon amazes me. I have known her all my life, and could never have put that into words. Do you know how things seem to come and go and shift about without any meaning? It is never so with her; she sees what it all means. I cannot explain it."

They sate in silence for a moment, and then Howard said: "It is very curious to be here; you know, or probably you don't know, how much interested I am in Jack; and somehow in talking to him I felt that there was something behind—something more to know. All this"—he waved his hand at the room—"my aunt, your father, yourself—it does not seem to me new and unfamiliar, but something which I have always known. I can't tell you in what a dream I have seemed to be moving ever since I came here. I have been here for twenty-four hours, and yet it seems all old and dear to me."

"I know that feeling," said the girl, "one dips

into something that has been going on for ever and ever—I feel like that to-night. It seems odd to talk like this, but you must remember that Jack tells me most things, and I seem to know you quite well. I knew it would be all easy somehow."

"Well, we are a sort of cousins," said Howard lightly. "That's such a comfort; it needn't entail anything, but it can save one all sorts of fencing and ceremony. I want to talk to you about Jack. He is a little mysterious to me still."

"Yes," she said, "he is mysterious, but he really is a dear: he was the most aggravating boy that ever lived, and I sometimes used really to hate him. I am afraid we used to fight a great deal; at least I did, but I suppose he was only pretending, for he never hurt me, and I know I used to hurt him—but then he deserved it!"

"What a picture!" said Howard, smiling; "no wonder that boys go to their private schools expecting to have to fight for their lives. I never had a sister; and that accounts perhaps for my peaceful disposition." He had a sudden sense as he spoke that he was talking as if to an undergraduate in friendly irony. To his surprise and pleasure he saw that his thought had translated itself.

"I suppose that is how you talk to your pupils," said the girl, smiling; "I recognise that—and that's what makes it easy to talk to you as Jack does—it's like an easy serve at lawn-tennis."

"I am glad it is easy," said Howard, "you don't know how many of my serves go into the net!"

"Lawn-tennis!" said Mr. Sandys from the other side of the room. "There's a good game, Howard! I am not much of a hand at it myself, but I enjoy playing. I don't mind making a spectacle of myself. One misses many good things by being afraid of looking a fool. What does it matter, I say to myself, as long as one doesn't *feel* a fool? You will come and play at the vicarage, I hope. Indeed, I want you to go and come just as you like. We are relations, you know, in a sort of way—at least connections. I don't know if you go in for genealogy—it's rather a hobby of mine; it fills up little bits of time, you know. I could reel you off quite a list of names, but Mrs. Graves doesn't care for genealogy, I know."

"Oh, not that!" said Mrs. Graves. "I think it is very interesting. But I rather agree with the minister who advised his flock to pray for good ancestors."

"Ha! ha!" said Mr. Sandys, "excellent, that; but it is really very curious you know, that the further one goes back the more one's ancestors increase. Talk of over-population; why if one goes back thirty or forty generations, the world would be over-populated with the ancestors of anyone of us. I remember posing a very clever mathematician with that once; but, as a fact, it's

quite the reverse, one finds. Are you interested in neolithic men, Howard? There are graves of them all over the down—it is not certain if they were neolithic, but they had very curious burial customs. Knees up to the chin, you know. Well, well, it's all very fascinating, and I should like to drive you over to Dorchester to look at the museum there—there are some questions I should like to ask you. But we must be off. A delightful evening, cousin Anne; a delightful evening, Howard. I feel quite rejuvenated—such a lot to ponder over."

Howard went to the door to see them off, and was rewarded by a parting smile from Maud, which made him feel curiously elated. He went back to the drawing-room with that faint feeling of flatness which comes of parting with lively guests; and yet it somehow gave him a pleasant sense of being at home.

"Well," said Mrs. Graves, "so now you have seen the Sandys interior. Dear Frank, how he does chatter, to be sure! but he is all alive too in his own way, and that is what matters. What did you think of Maud? I want you to like her—she is a great friend of mine, and really a fine creature. Not very happy just now, perhaps. But while dear old Frank never sees past the outside of things—what a lot of things he does see!—she sees inside, I think. But I am tired to death. I always feel after talking to Frank as if I had been driving in a dog-cart over a ploughed field!"

VII

COUNTRY LIFE

Howard woke early, after sweet and wild dreams of great landscapes and rich adventures; as his thoughts took shape, he began to feel as if he had passed some boundary yesterday; escaped, as a child escapes from a familiar garden into great vague woodlands. There was his talk with Mrs. Graves first—that had opened up for him a new region, indeed, of the mind and soul, and had revealed to him an old force, perhaps long within his grasp, but which he had never tried to use or wield. And the vision too of Maud crossed his mind—a perfectly beautiful thing, which had risen like a star. He did not think of it as love at all—that did not cross his mind—it was just the thought of something enchantingly and exquisitely beautiful, which disturbed him, awed him, threw his mind off its habitual track. How extraordinarily lovely, simple, sweet, the girl had seemed to him in the dim room, in the faint light; and how fearless and frank she had been! He was conscious only of something adorable, which raised, as beautiful things did, a sense of something unapproachable, some yearning which could not be satisfied. How far away, how

faded and dusty his ordinary contented Cambridge life now seemed to him!

He breakfasted alone, read a few letters which had been forwarded to him, and went to the library. A few minutes later Miss Merry tapped at the door, and came in.

"Mrs. Graves asked me to say—she was sorry she forgot to mention it—that if you care for shooting or fishing, the keeper will come in and take your orders. She thinks you might like to ask Jack to luncheon and go out with him; she sends you her love, and wants you to do what you like."

"Thank you very much!" said Howard, "I rather expect Jack will be round here and I will ask him. I know he would like it, and I should too—if you are sure Mrs. Graves approves."

"Oh, yes," said Miss Merry, smiling, "she always approves of people doing what they like."

Miss Merry still hesitated at the door. "May I ask you another question, Mr. Kennedy—I hope I am not troublesome—I wonder if you could suggest some books for us to read? I read a good deal to Mrs. Graves, and I am afraid we get rather into a groove. We ought to read some of the new books; we want to know what people are saying and thinking—we don't want to get behind."

"Why, of course," said Howard, "I shall be delighted—but I am afraid I am not likely to be of much use; I don't read as much as I ought; but

if you will tell me the sort of things you care about, and what you have been reading, we will try to make out a list. Won't you sit down and see what we can do ? "

" Oh, I don't like to interrupt you," said Miss Merry. " But if you would be so kind."

She sat down at the far end of the table, and Howard was dimly and amusedly conscious that this *tête-à-tête* was of the nature of a romantic adventure to the little lady. He was surprised, when they came to talk, to find how much they appeared to have read of a solid kind. He asked if they had any plan.

" No, indeed, " said Miss Merry, " we just wander on ; one thing suggests another. Mrs. Graves likes *long* books ; she says she likes to get at a subject quietly—that there ought not to be too many good things in books ; she likes them slow and spacious."

" I am afraid one has to go back a good way for that ! " said Howard. " People can't afford now to know more than a manual of a couple of hundred pages can tell them about a subject. I can tell you some good historical books, and some books of literary criticism and biography. I can't do much about poetry or novels ; and philosophy, science, and theology I am no use at all for. But I could get you some advice if you like. That's the best of Cambridge, there are so many people about who are able to tell what to read."

While they were making out a list, Jack arrived breathlessly, and Miss Merry shamefacedly withdrew. Howard said: "Perhaps that will do to go on with—we will have another talk to-morrow. I begin to see the sort of thing you want."

Jack was in a state of high excitement.

"What on earth were you doing," he said, as the door closed, "with that sedate spinster?"

"We were making out a list of books!"

"Ah," said Jack with a profound air, "books are dangerous things—that's the intellectual way of making love! You must be a great excitement here, with all your ideas!—but now," he went on, "here I am—I hurried back the moment breakfast was over. I have been horribly bored—a lawn-tennis party yesterday, the females much to the fore—it's no good that, it's not the game; at least it's not lawn-tennis; it's a game all right, but I much suspect it has to do with love-making rather than exercise."

"You seem very suspicious this morning," said Howard; "you accuse me of flirting to begin with, and now you suspect lawn-tennis."

Jack shook his head. "I do hate love-making!" he said, "it spoils everything—it gets in the way, and makes fools of people; the longer I live, the more I see that most of the things that people do are excuses for doing something else! But never mind that! I said I had got to get back to

be coached; I said that one of our dons was staying in the village and had his eye on me. What I want to know is whether you have made any arrangements about shooting or fishing? You said you would if you could."

"The keeper is coming in," said Howard, "and we will have a talk to him; but mind, on one condition—work in the morning, exercise in the afternoon; and you are to stop to lunch."

"Cousin Anne is bursting into hospitality," said Jack, "because Maud is coming in for the afternoon. I haven't had time to pump Maud yet about you, but, by George, I'm going to pump you about her and father. Did you have a very thick time last night? I could see father was rather licking his lips."

"Now, no more chatter," said Howard; "you go and get some books, and we will set to work at once." Jack nodded and fled.

When he came back the keeper was waiting, a friendly old man, who seemed delighted at the idea of some sport. Jack said, "Look here, I have arranged it all. Shooting to-day, and you can have father's gun; he hardly ever uses it, and I have my own. Fishing to-morrow, and so on alternately. There are heaps of rabbits up the valley—the place crawls with them."

Howard taught Jack for an hour, as clearly and briskly as he could, making him take notes. He found him quick and apt, and at the end, Jack said,

"Now if I could only do this every day at Cambridge, I should soon get on. My word, you do do it well! It makes me shudder to think of all the practice you must have had."

Howard set Jack down to prepare some further work by himself, and attacked his own papers; and very soon it was time for lunch.

Mrs. Graves greeted Jack with much affectionateness, and asked what they had arranged for the afternoon. Howard told her, and added that he hoped she did not object to shooting.

"No, not at all," said Mrs. Graves, "if *you* can do it conscientiously—I couldn't! As usual I am hopelessly inconsistent. I couldn't kill things myself, but as long as I eat meat, I can't object. It's no good arguing about these things. If one begins to argue about destroying life, there are such excellent reasons for not eating anything, or wearing anything, or even crossing the lawn! I have long believed that plants are conscious, but we have got to exist somehow at each other's expense. Instinct is the only guide for women; if they begin to reason, they get run away with by reason; that is what makes fanatics. I won't go so far as to wish you good sport, but you may as well get all the rabbits you can; I'll send them round the village, and try to salve my conscience so."

They talked a little about the books Howard

had been recommending, but Mrs. Graves was bent on making much of Jack.

"I don't get you here often by yourself," she said. "I daren't ask a modern young man to come and see two old frumps—one old frump, I mean! But I gather that you have views of your own, Jack, and some day I shall try to get at them. I suppose that in a small place like this we all know a great deal more about each other than we suspect each other of knowing. What a comfort that we have tongues that we can hold! It wouldn't be possible to live, if we knew that all the absurdities we pride ourselves on concealing were all perfectly well known and canvassed by all our friends. However, as long as we only enjoy each other's faults, and don't go in for correcting them, we can get on. I hope you don't *disapprove* of people, Jack! That's the hopeless attitude."

"Well, I hate some people," said Jack, "but I hate them so much that it is quite a pleasure to meet them and to think how infernal they are; and when it's like that, I should be sorry if they improved."

"I won't go as far as that," said Howard. "The most I do is to be thankful that their lack of improvement can still entertain me. One can never be thankful enough for really grotesque people. But I confess I don't enjoy seeing people spiteful and mean and vicious. I want to obliterate all that."

"I want it to be obliterated," said Mrs. Graves; "but I don't feel equal to doing it. Oh, well, we mustn't get solemn over it; that's the mischief! But I mustn't keep you gentlemen from more serious pursuits—'real things,' I believe, Jack?"

"Mr. Kennedy has been sneaking of me," said Jack. "I don't like to see people mean and spiteful. It gives me pain. I want all that obliterated."

"This is what happens to my pupils," said Howard. "Come on, Jack, you shall not expose my methods like this."

They went off with the old keeper, who carried a bag of writhing ferrets, and was accompanied by a boy with a spade and a line and a bag of cartridges. As they went on, Jack catechised Howard closely.

"Did my family behave themselves?" he said. "Did you want them obliterated? I expect you had a good pull at the Governor, but don't forget he is a good chap. He is so dreadfully interested, but you come to plenty of sense last of all. I admit it is last, but it's there. It's no joke facing him if there's a row! he doesn't say much then, and that makes it awful. He has a way of looking out of the window, if I cheek him, for about five minutes, which turns me sick. Up on the top he is a bit frothy—but there's no harm in that, and he keeps things going."

"Yes," said Howard, "I felt that, and I may tell

you plainly I liked him very much, and thought him a thoroughly good sort."

"Well, what about Maud?" said Jack.

Howard felt a tremor. He did not want to talk about Maud, and he did not want Jack to talk about her. It seemed like laying hands on something sacred and secluded. So he said, "Really, I don't know as yet—I only had one talk with her. I can't tell. I thought her delightful; like you with your impudence left out."

"The little cat!" said Jack; "she is as impudent as they make them. I'll be bound she has taken the length of your foot. What did she talk about? stars and flowers? That's one of her dodges."

"I decline to answer," said Howard; "and I won't have you spoiling my impressions. Just leave me alone to make up my mind, will you?"

Jack looked at him,—he had spoken sharply—nodded, and said, "All right! I won't give her away. I see you are lost; but I'll get it all out of you some time."

They were by this time some way up the valley. There were rabbit burrows everywhere among the thickets. The ferrets were put in. Howard and Jack were posted below, and the shooting began. The rabbits bolted well, and Howard experienced a lively satisfaction, quite out of proportion, he felt, to the circumstances, at finding that he could shoot a great deal better than his pupil. The old knack

came back to him, and he toppled over his rabbits cleanly and in a masterly way.

"You are rather good at this!" said Jack. "Won't I blazon it abroad up at Beaufort. You shall have all the credit and more. I can't see how you always manage to get them in the head."

"It's a trick," said Howard; "you have got to get a particular swing, and when you have got it, it's difficult to miss—it's only practice; and I shot a good deal at one time."

Howard was unreasonably happy that afternoon. It was a still, sunny day, and the steep down stretched away above them, an ancient English woodland, with all its thorn-thickets and elder-clumps. It had been like this, he thought, from the beginning of history, never touched by the hand of man. The expectant waiting, the quick aim, the sudden shot, took off the restlessness of his brain; and as they stood there, often waiting for a long time in silence, a peculiar quality of peace and contentment enveloped his spirit. It was all so old, so settled, so quiet, that all sense of retrospect and prospect passed from his mind. He was just glad to be alive and alert, glad of his friendly companion, robust and strong. A few pictures passed before his mind, but he was glad just to let his eyes wander over the scene, the steep turf ramparts, the close-set dingles, the spring sunshine falling softly over all,

as the sun passed over and the shadows lengthened. At last a ferret got hung up, and had to be dug out. Howard looked at his watch, and said they must go back to tea. Jack protested in vain that there was plenty of light left. Howard said they were expected back. They left the keeper to recover the ferret, and went back quickly down the valley. Jack was in supreme delight.

"Well, that's an honest way of spending time!" he said. "My word, how I dangle about here; it isn't good for my health. But, by George, I wish I could shoot like you, Mr. Kennedy, Sir."

"Why this sudden obsequiousness?" said Howard.

"Oh, because I never know what to call you," said Jack. "I can't call you by your Christian name, and Mr. Kennedy seems absurd. What do you like?"

"Whatever comes natural," said Howard.

"Well, I'll call you Howard when we are together," said Jack. "But mind, not at Beaufort! If I call you anything, it will have to be Mr. Kennedy. I hate men fraternising with the Dons. The Dons rather encourage it, because it makes them feel youthful and bucks them up. The men are just as bad about Christian names. Gratters on getting your Christian name, you know! It's like a girls' school. I wonder why Cambridge is more like a girls' school than a public school is?

I suppose they are more sentimental. I do loathe that."

When they got back they found Maud at tea; she had been there all the afternoon; she greeted Howard very pleasantly, but there was a touch of embarrassment created by the presence of Jack, who regarded her severely and called her "Miss."

"He's got some grudge against me," said Maud to Howard. "He always has when he calls me Miss."

"What else should I call you?" said Jack; "Mr. Kennedy has been telling me that one should call people by whatever name seems natural. You are a Miss to-day, and no mistake. You are at some game or other!"

"Now, Jack, be quiet!" said Mrs. Graves; "that is how the British paterfamilias gets made. You must not begin to make your womankind uncomfortable in public. You must not think aloud. You must keep up the mysteries of chivalry!"

"I don't care for mysteries," said Jack, "but I'll behave. My father says one mustn't seethe the kid in its mother's milk. I will leave Miss to her conscience."

"Did you enjoy yourself?" said Mrs. Graves to Howard.

"Yes, I'm afraid I did," said Howard, "very much indeed."

"Some book I read the other day," said Mrs.

Graves, "stated that men ought to do primeval things, eat under-done beef, sleep in their clothes, drink too much, kill things. It sounds disgusting; but I suppose you felt primeval?"

"I don't know what it was," said Howard. "I felt very well content."

"My word, he can shoot!" said Jack to Mrs. Graves; "I'm a perfect duffer beside him; he shot four-fifths of the bag, and there's a perfect mountain of rabbits to come in."

"Horrible, horrible!" said Mrs. Graves, "but are there enough to go round the village?"

"Two apiece," said Jack, "to every man a damsel or two! Now, Maud, come on—ten o'clock, to-morrow, Sir—and perhaps a little fishing later?"

"You had better stay to lunch, whenever you come and work in the morning, Jack," said Mrs. Graves; "and I'll turn you inside out before very long."

Howard went off to his work with a pleasant sense of the open air. They dined together quietly; after dinner he went and sate down by Mrs. Graves.

"Jack's a nice boy," she said, "very nice—don't make him pert!"

"I am afraid I shan't *make* him anything," said Howard. "He will go his own way, sure enough; but he isn't pert—he comes to heel, and he remembers. He is like the true gentleman—he is never unintentionally offensive."

Mrs. Graves laughed, and said, "Yes, that is so."

Howard went on, "I have been thinking a great deal about our talk yesterday, and it's a new light to me. I do not think I fully understand, but I feel that there is something very big behind it all, which I want to understand. This great force you speak of—is it an *aim?*"

"That's a good question," said Mrs. Graves. "No, it's not an aim at all. It's too big for that; an aim is quite on a lower level. There's no aim in the big things. A man doesn't fall ill with an aim—he doesn't fall in love with an aim. It just comes upon him."

"But then," said Howard, "is it more than a sort of artistic gift which some have and many have not? I have known a few real artists, and they just did not care for anything else in the world. All the rest of life was just a passing of time, a framework to their work. There was an artist I knew, who was dying. The doctor asked him if he wanted anything. 'Just a full day's work,' he said."

"Yes," said Mrs. Graves, "it is like that in a way; it is the one thing worth doing and being. But it isn't a conscious using of minutes and opportunities —it isn't a plan; it is just a fulness of life, rejoicing to live, to see, to interpret, to understand. It doesn't matter what life you live—it is how you live it. Life is only the cup for the liquor which must

else be spilled. I can only use an old phrase—it is being 'in the spirit': when you ask whether it is a special gift, of course some people have it more strongly and consciously than others. But it is the thing to which we are all tending sooner or later; and the mysterious thing about it is that so many people do not seem to know they have it. Yet it is always just the becoming aware of what is there."

"How do you account for that?" said Howard.

"Why," said Mrs. Graves, "to a great extent because religion is in such an odd state. It is as if the people who knew or suspected the secret, did all they could to conceal it—just as parents try to keep their children ignorant of the ideas of sex. Religion has got so horribly mixed up with other things, with respectability, social order, conventions, doctrines, metaphysics, ceremony, music—it has become so specialised in the hands of priests who have a great institution to support, that dust is thrown in people's eyes—and just as they begin to think they perceive the secret, they are surrounded by tiresome dogmatists saying, 'It is this and that—it is this doctrine, that tradition.' Well, that sort of religion *is* a very special accomplishment—ecclesiastical religion. I don't deny that it has artistic qualities, but it is a poor narrow product; and then the technically religious make such a fuss if they see the shoal of fish escaping the net, and beat the water so vehemently that the fish think it

safer to stay where they are, and so you get sardines in tins!" said Mrs. Graves with a smile—"by which I mean the churches."

"Yes," said Howard, "that is perfectly true! Christianity was at first the most new, radical, original, anarchical force in the world—it was the purest individualism; it was meant to over-ride all human combinations by simply disregarding them; it was not a social reform, and still less a political reform; it was a new spirit, and it was meant to create a new kind of fellowship, the mere existence of which would do away with the need for organisation; it broke meekly, like water, through all human partitions, and I suppose it has been tamed."

"Yes," said Mrs. Graves, "it is not now the world against religion. It is organised religion against real religion, because religion is above and apart from all institutions. Christ said, 'When they persecute you in one city, flee into another'; and the result of that is the Monroe doctrine!"

"But are you not a Christian?" said Howard.

"I believe myself to be one," said Mrs. Graves; "and no doubt you will say, 'Why do you live in wealth and comfort?' That's a difficulty, because Christ meant us to be poor. But if one hands over one's money to Christian institutions now, one is subsidising the forces of the world—at least so I think. It's very difficult. Christ said that we

should bestow our goods upon the poor; but if I were to divide my goods to-morrow among my neighbours, they would be only injured by it—it would not be Christian of them to take them—they have enough. If they have not, I give it them. It does less harm to me than to them. But this I know is very irrational; and the point is not to be affected by that. I could live in a cottage to-morrow, if there was need."

"Yes, I believe you could," said Howard.

"As long as one is not dependent upon money," said Mrs. Graves, "it doesn't very much matter. The real point is to take the world as it comes, and to be sure that one is on the side of what is true and simple and sincere; but I do not pretend to have solved everything, and I am hoping to learn more. I do learn more every day. One can't interfere with the lives of people; poverty is not the worst evil. It is nice to be clean, but I sometimes think that the only good I get from money is cleanliness—and that is only a question of habit! The real point is to be in life, to watch life, to love it, to live it; to be in direct relations with everyone, not to be superior, not to be *kind*—that implies superiority. I just plod along, believing, fearing, hoping, loving, glad to live while I may, not afraid to die when I must. The only detachment worth having is the detachment from the idea of making things one's own. I can't appropriate

the sunset and the spring, the loves and cares of others ; it is all divided up, more fairly than we think. I have had many sorrows and sufferings ; but I am more interested than ever in life, glad to help and be helped, ready to change, desiring to change. It isn't a great way of living ; but one must not want that—and believe me, dear Howard, it is the only way."

VIII

THE INHERITANCE

The first day or two of Howard's stay at Windlow seemed like a week, the succeeding week seemed like a day, as soon as he had settled down to a certain routine of life. He became aware of a continued sympathetic and quite unobtrusive scrutiny of him, his ways, his tastes, his thoughts, on the part of his aunt—her questions were subtle, penetrating, provocative enough for him to wish to express an opinion. He did not dislike it, and used no diplomacy himself; he found his aunt's mind shrewd, fresh, unaffected, and at the same time inspiring. She habitually spoke with a touch of irony—not bitter irony, but the irony that is at once a compliment and a sign of affection, such as Socrates used to the handsome boys that came about him. She was not in the smallest degree cynical, but she was very decidedly humorous. Howard thought that she did people even more than justice, while she was frankly delighted if they also provided her with amusement. She held nothing inconveniently sacred, and Howard admired the fine balance of interest and detachment which she showed, her delight in life, her high faith in something large,

eternal, and advancing. Her health was evidently very frail, but she made light of it—it was almost the only thing she did not seem to find interesting. How could this clever, vivacious woman, Howard asked himself, retain this wonderful freshness and sweetness of mind in such solitude and dulness of life? He could imagine her the centre of a *salon* —she had all the gifts of a *saloniste*, the power of keeping a talk in hand, of giving her entire thought to her neighbour, and yet holding the whole group in view. Solitary, frail, secluded as she was, she was like an unrusted sword, and lavished her wit and her affection on all alike, callers, villagers, servants; and yet he never saw her tired or depressed. She took life as she found it, and was delighted with its simplest combinations. He found her company entirely absorbing and inspiring. He told her, in answer to her frank interest—she seemed to be interested on her own account, and not to please him—more about his own life than he had ever told a human being. She always wanted facts, impressions, details: "Enlarge that—describe that—tell me some more particulars," were phrases often on her lips. And he was delighted, too, by the belief that her explorations into his mind and life pleased and satisfied her. It dawned on him gradually that she was a woman of rich experience, and that her tranquillity was an aftergrowth, a development—"That was in my discontented days," she

said once. "It is impossible to think of you as discontented," he had said. "Ah," she said lightly, "I had my dreams, like everyone else; but I saw at last that one must *take* life—one can't *make* it—and accept its limitations with enjoyment."

One morning, when he was called, the butler gave him a letter—he had been there about a fortnight—from his aunt. He opened it, expecting that it was to say that she was ill. He found that it ran as follows:

"My dear Boy,—*I always think that business is best done by letter and not by conversation. I am getting an old woman and my life is uncertain. I want to make a statement of intentions. I may tell you that I am a comparatively wealthy woman; my dear husband left me everything he had; including what he spent on this place, it came to about sixty thousand pounds. Now I intend to leave that back to his family; there are several sisters of his alive, and they are not wealthy people; but I have saved money too; and it is my wish to leave you this house and the residue of my fortune, after arranging for some small legacies. The estate is not worth very much—a great deal of it is wild downland. But you would have the place, when I died, and about twelve hundred a year. It would be understood that you should live here a certain amount—I don't believe in non-resident landlords. But I do not mean to tie you down to live*

here altogether. It is only my wish that you should do something for your tenants and neighbours. If you stayed on at Cambridge you could come here in vacations. But my hope would be that you might marry. It is a house for a family. If you do not care to live here, I would rather it were sold. While I live, I hope you will be content to spend some time here, and make acquaintance with our neighbours, by which I mean the village people. I shall tell Cousin Frank my intentions, and that will probably suffice to make it known. I have a very great love for the place, and as far as I can see, you will be likely to have the same.

"You need not feel overburdened with gratitude. You are my only near relation; and indeed I may say that if I were to die before I have signed my will, you would inherit all my fortune as next-of-kin. So you will see that instead of enriching you, I am to a great extent disinheriting you! Just tell me simply if you acquiesce. I want no pledges, nor do I want to bind you in any way. I will not say more, except that it has been a very deep delight to me to find a son in my old age. I had always hoped it would turn out so; and in my experience, God is very careful to give us our desires, just or unjust, great or small.—Your loving Aunt, ANNE GRAVES."

Howard was stupefied for a moment by this communication, but he was more affected by the love and confidence it showed than by the prospect

of wealth—wealth was not a thing he had ever expected, or indeed thought much about; but it was a home that he had found. The great lack of his life had been a local attachment, a place where he had reason to live. Cambridge with all its joys had never been quite that. A curious sense of emotion at the thought that the sweet place, the beautiful old house, was to be his own, came over him; and another far-off dream darted into his mind as well, which he did not dare to shape. He got up and wrote a short note.

"My dear Aunt,—*Your letter fills me with astonishment. I can only say that I accept in love and gratitude what you offer me. The feeling that I have found a home and a mother, so suddenly and so unexpectedly, fills me with joy and happiness. I think with sadness of all the good years I have missed, by a sort of stupid perversity; but I won't regard that now. I will only thank you once more with all my heart for the proof of affection which your letter gives me.—Your grateful and affectionate nephew,*

"Howard Kennedy."

The old house had a welcoming air as he passed through it that morning; it seemed to hold him in its patient embrace, to ask for love. He spent the morning with Jack, but in a curiously distracted mood.

"What has happened to you?" said Jack at the end of the morning. "You have not been thinking about what you are doing. You seem like a man who has been stroking a winning crew. Has the Master been made a Dean, and have you been elected Master? They say you have a chance."

Howard laughed and said, "You are very sharp, Jack! I have *not* been attending. Something very unexpected has happened. I mustn't tell you now, but you will soon know. I have drawn a prize. Now don't pump me!"

"Here's another prize!" said Jack. "You are to lunch with us to-morrow, and to discuss my future career. There's glory for you! I am not to be present, and father is scheming to get me invited to luncheon here. If he fails, I am to take out some sandwiches and to eat them in the kitchen garden. Maud is to be present, and '*confer*,' he says, 'though without a vote'!"

Howard met Mrs. Graves in the drawing-room; she kissed him, and holding his hand for a moment said, "Thank you for your note, my dear boy. That's all settled, then! Well, it's a great joy to me, and I get more than I give by the bargain. It's a shameless bribe, to secure the company of a charming nephew for a sociable old woman. Some time I shall want to tell you more about the people here—but I won't bore you; and let us just get quietly used to it all. One must not be pompous about

money; it is doing it too much honour; and the best of it is that I have found a son." Howard smiled, kissed the hand which held his, and said no more.

The Vicar turned up in the afternoon, and apologised to Mrs. Graves for asking Howard to luncheon on the following day. "The fact is," he said, "that I am anxious to have the benefit of his advice about Jack's future. I think we ought to look at things from all sorts of angles, and Howard will be able, with his professional knowledge of young men, to correct the tendency to parental bias which is so hard to eliminate. I am a fond father—fond, but I hope not foolish—and I trust we shall be able to arrive at some conclusion."

"Then Jack and Maud can come and lunch with me," said Mrs. Graves; "you won't want them, I am sure."

"You are a sorceress," said Mr. Sandys, "in the literary sense of course—you divine my thought!" —but it was evident that he had much looked forward to using a little diplomacy, and was somewhat disappointed. He went on, "It will be very kind of you to have Jack, but I think I shall want Maud's assistance. I have a great belief in the penetration —in the observation of the feminine mind; more than I have, if you will excuse my frankness, in their power of dealing with a practical situation. Woman to interpret events, men to foresee contin-

gencies. Woman to indicate, man to predicate—perhaps I mean predict! No matter; the thought, I think, is clear. Well, then, that is settled! I claim Howard for luncheon—a very simple affair—and for a walk; and by five o'clock we shall have settled this important matter, I don't doubt."

"Very well," said Mrs. Graves; "but before you go, I must claim *you* for a short stroll. I have something to tell you; and as Howard and Jack are dying to get away to deprive some innocent creatures of the privilege of life, they had better go and leave us."

That evening Howard had a long, quiet talk to his aunt. She said, "I am not going to talk business. Our lawyer is coming over on Saturday, and you had better get all the details from him. You must just go round the place with him, and see if there is anything you would like to see altered. It will be an immense comfort to put all that in your hands. Mind, dear boy," she said, "I want you to begin at once. I shall be ready to do whatever is necessary." Then she went on in a different strain. "But there is one other thing I want to say now, and that is that I should above all things like to see you married—don't, by the way, fall in love with dear Jane, who worships the ground you tread on! I have been observing you, and I feel little doubt that marriage is what you most need. I don't expect it has been in your mind at all! Perhaps you have not had

enough to marry on, but I am not sorry for that, for a special reason; and I think, too, that men who have the care of boys and young men have their paternal instinct to a large extent satisfied; but that is only a small part of marriage! It isn't only that I want this house to be a home—that's merely a sentimental feeling—but you need to love and be loved, and to have the anxious care of someone close to you. There is nothing like marriage. It probably is not quite as transcendental an affair as you think. That's the mistake which intellectual people so often make—it's a very natural and obvious thing—and of course it means far more to a woman than to a man. But life is not complete without it. It is the biggest fact which happens to us. I only want you just to keep it in your mind as a possibility. Don't be afraid of it! My husband was your age when he married me, and though I was very unreasonable in those days, I am sure it was a happy thing for him, though he thought he was too old. There, I don't want to press you, in this or in anything. I do not think you will be happy living here without a wife, even if you go on with Cambridge. But one can't mould things to one's wishes. My fault is to want to organise everything for everybody, and I have made all my worst blunders so. I hope I have given up all that. But if I live to see it, the day when you come and tell me that you have won a wife will be the next

happiest day to the day when I found a son of my heart. There, dear boy, I won't sentimentalise; but that's the truth; I shall wake up to-morrow and for many days, feeling that some good fortune has befallen me; but we should have found each other some time, even if I had been a poor and miserable old woman. You have given me all that I desired; give me a daughter too, if you can!"

"Well," said Howard, smiling, "I have no theory on the subject. I never regarded marriage as either impossible or possible. It seemed to me that one was either caught away in a fiery chariot, or else was left under one's juniper tree; and I have been very comfortable there. I thought I had all I wanted; and I feel a little dizzy now at the way in which my cup of life has suddenly been seized and filled with wine to the brim. One doesn't find a home and a mother and a wife in a fortnight!"

"I don't know!" said Mrs. Graves, smiling at him. "Some of the best marriages I know have been made in haste. I remember talking to a girl the other day who was engaged to a man within ten days of the time they had met. I said, 'Well, you have not wasted time.' 'Oh,' she said, apparently rather hurt, 'I kept Henry waiting a long time. I had to think it all over. I wasn't by any means sure I wanted to marry him.' I quoted a saying of an old friend of mine who when he was asked why he had proposed to a girl he had only known three

days, said, ' I don't know! I liked her, and thought I should like to see more of her! ' "

" I think I must make out a list of possible candidates," said Howard, smiling. " I dare say your Jane would help me. I could mark them for various qualities ; we believe in marks at Cambridge. But I must have time to get used to all my new gifts."

" Oh, one doesn't take long to get used to happiness," said Mrs. Graves. " It always seems the most natural thing in the world. Tennyson was all wrong about sorrow. Sorrow is always the casual mistress, and not the wife. One recovers from everything but happiness ; that is one's native air."

IX

THE VICAR

The Vicarage was a pleasant house, with an air of comfort and moderate wealth about it. It was part of Frank Sandys' sense, thought Howard, that he was content to live so simple and retired a life. He did not often absent himself, even for a holiday. Howard was shown into the study which Mr. Sandys had improved and enlarged. It was a big room, with an immense, perfectly plain deal table in the middle, stained a dark brown; and the Vicar showed Howard with high glee how each of the four sides of the table was consecrated to a different avocation. "My accounts end!" he said, "my sermon side! my correspondence end! my genealogical side!" There were a number of small dodges, desks for holding books, flaps which could be let up and down, slits in the table through which papers could be dropped into drawers, a cord by which the bell could be rung without rising from his place, a cord by which the door could be bolted. "Not very satisfactory, that last," said the Vicar, "but I am on the track of an improvement. The worst of it is," said the good man, "that I have so little time. I make extracts from the books I read

for my sermons, I cut out telling anecdotes from the papers. I like to raise questions every now and then in the *Guardian*, and that lets me in for a lot of correspondence. I even, I must confess, sometimes address questions to important people about their public utterances, and I have an interesting volume of replies, mostly from secretaries. Then I am always at work on my Somersetshire genealogies, and that means a mass of letters. The veriest trifles, of course, they will seem to a man like yourself; but I fail in mental grasp—I keep hammering away at details; that is my line; and after all it keeps one alert and alive. You know my favourite thesis—it is touch with human nature that I value, and I am brought into contact with many minds. I don't exaggerate the importance of my work, but I enjoy it; and after all, that is the point! I daresay it would be more dignified if I pretended to be a disappointed man," said the Vicar, with a smile which won Howard's heart, "but I am not—I am a very happy man, as busy as the fabled bee! I shouldn't relish a change. There was some question, I may tell you, at one time, of my becoming Archdeacon, but it was a relief to me when it was settled and when Bedington was appointed. I woke up in the morning, I remember, the day after his appointment was announced, and I said to myself—'Why, it's a relief after all!' I don't mean that I shouldn't have

enjoyed it, but it would have meant giving up some part of my work. I really have the life I like, and if my dear wife had been spared to me, I should be the happiest of men; but that was not to be—and by the way, I must recollect to show you some of her drawings. But I must not inflict all this upon you—and by the way," said the Vicar, "Mrs. Graves did me the honour of telling me yesterday her intentions with regard to yourself, and I told her I was heartily glad to hear it. It is an immense thing for the place to have some one who will look into things a little, and bring a masculine mind to bear on our simple problems. For myself, it will be an untold gain to be brought in touch with a more intellectual atmosphere. I foresee a long perspective of stimulating discussions. I will venture to say that you will be warmly welcomed here, and indeed you seem quite one of us already. But now we must go and get our luncheon—we have much to discuss; and you will not mind Maud being present, I know; the children are devoted to each other, and though I have studied their tastes and temperaments very closely, yet 'crabbed age and youth' you know, and all that—she will be able, I think, to cast some light on our little problem."

They went together into the drawing-room, a pleasant old-fashioned room—"a temple of domestic peace," said the Vicar, "a pretty phrase

of Carlyle's that! Maud has her own little sitting-room—the old schoolroom in fact—which she will like to show you. I think it very necessary that each member of a family should if possible have a sanctum, a private uninvaded domain—but in this room the separate strains unite."

Maud was sitting near the window when the two came in. She got up and came quickly forward, with a smile, and shook hands with Howard. She had just the same look of virginal freshness and sweetness in the morning light—a little less mysterious, perhaps; but there came upon Howard a strange feeling, partly of intense admiration, partly a sort of half-jealousy that he should know so little of the girl's past, and a half-terror of all other influences and relations in the unknown background of her life. He wanted to know whom and what she cared about, what her hopes were, what her thoughts rested upon and concerned themselves with. He had never felt any such emotion before, and it was not wholly agreeable to him. He felt thrown off his balance, interfered with, diverted from his normal course. He wanted to do and say something which could claim her attention and confidence; and the frank and almost sisterly regard she gave him was not wholly to his mind. This was mingled, too, with a certain fear of he knew not what; he feared her criticism, her disapproval; he felt his own dulness and inelasticity. He seemed

to himself empty, heavy, awkward, disconcerted by her quiet and expectant gaze. This came and went like a flash, and gave him an almost physical uneasiness.

"Well, here we are," said the Vicar. "I must say this is very comfortable—a sort of family council, with matters of importance to discuss." Maud led the way to the dining-room. "I said we would have everything put on the table," said the Vicar, "and wait on ourselves; that will leave us quite free to talk. It's not a lack of any respect, Howard—quite the contrary; but these honest people down here pick up all sorts of gossip—in a quiet life, you know, a little gossip goes a long way; and even my good maids are human—I should be so in their place! Howard, a bit of this chicken—our own chickens, our own vegetables, our country cider—everything home-grown; and now to business, and we will settle Master Jack in a turn. My own belief is, in choosing a profession, to think of all possibilities and eliminate them one by one."

"Yes," said Howard, "but we are met by this initial difficulty; that one might settle a dozen professions for Jack, and there is not the smallest guarantee that he would choose any of them. I think he will take his own line. I never knew anyone who knew so definitely what he intended to do, and what he did not intend to do!"

"You have hit it," said the Vicar, "and I do not

think you could have said anything which could please me more. He is independent; it is my own temperament over again! You will forgive a touch of vanity, Howard, but that is me all over. And that simplifies our plan of action very considerably, you know!"

"Yes," said Howard, "it undoubtedly does. I have no doubt from what Jack told me that he intends to make money. It isn't, in him, just the vague desire to have the command of money, which most young men have. I have to talk over their careers with a good many young men, and it generally ends in their saying they would like a secretaryship, which would give them interesting work and long holidays and the command of much of their time, and lead on to something better, with a prospect of early retirement on a pension."

The Vicar laughed loudly at this. "Excellent!" he said, "a very human view; that's a real bit of human nature."

"But Jack," said Howard, "isn't like that. He enjoys his life and gets what fun out of it he can; but he thinks Cambridge a waste of time. I don't know any young man who is so perfectly clear that he wants real work. He is not idle as many young men are idle, prolonging the easy days as long as they can. He is an extraordinary mixture; he enjoys himself like a schoolboy, and yet he wants to get to work."

"Well, I think that a very encouraging picture!" said the Vicar; "there is something very sensible about that. I confess I have mostly seen the schoolboy side of Jack, and it delights one to know that there is a serious side! Let us hear what Maud thinks; this kind of talk is really very enjoyable."

"Yes," said Maud, looking up. "I am sure that Mr. Kennedy is quite right. I believe that Jack would like to go into an office to-morrow."

"There," said the Vicar, "you see she agrees with you. It is really a pleasure to find oneself mistaken. I confess I had not discerned this quality in Jack; he had seemed to me much set on amusement."

"Oh yes," said Howard, "he likes his fun, and he is active enough; but it is all passing the time."

"Well, this is really most satisfactory," said the Vicar. "So you really think he is cut out for business; something commercial? Well, I confess I had rather hankered after something more definitely academic and scholastic—something more intellectual! But I bow to your superior knowledge, Howard, and we must think of possible openings. Well, I shall enjoy that. My own money, what there is of it, was made by my grandfather in trade—the manufacture of cloth, I believe. Would cloth now, the manufacture of cloth, appear to provide the requisite opening? I have some cousins still in the firm."

"I think it would do as well as anything else," said Howard, "and if you have any interest in a particular business, it would be worth while to make inquiries."

"Before I go to bed to-night," said the Vicar, "I will send a statement of the case to my cousin; that will set the ball rolling."

"Won't you have a talk with Jack first?" said Howard. "You may depend upon it he will have some views."

"The very thing," said the Vicar. "I will put aside all my other work, and talk to Jack after tea; if any difficulty should arise, I may look to you for further counsel. This is really most satisfactory. This matter has been in my mind in a nebulous way for a long time; and you enter the scene with your intellectual grip, and your psychological penetration—if that is not too intricate a word—and the situation is clear at once. Well, I am most grateful to you."

The talk then became general, or rather passed into the Vicar's hands. "I have ventured," he said, "to indicate to Maud what Cousin Anne was good enough to tell me last night—she laid no embargo on the news—and a few particulars about your inheritance will not be lacking in interest—and on our walk this afternoon, to which I am greatly looking forward, we will explore your domains."

This simple compliment produced a curious

effect on Howard. He realised as he had not done before the singular change in his position that his aunt's announcement had produced: a country squire, a proprietor—he could not think of himself in that light—it was like a curious dream.

After luncheon, Mr. Sandys excused himself for a few minutes; he had to step over and speak to the sexton. Maud would take Howard round the garden, show him her room, "just our simple background—we want you to realise that!"

As soon as they were alone together, Howard said to Maud, "We seem to have settled Jack's affairs very summarily. I hope you do agree with me?"

"Yes," said Maud, "I do indeed. It is wonderful to me that you should know so much about him, with all your other pupils to know. He isn't a boy who talks much about himself, though he seems to; and I don't think my father understood what he was feeling. Jack doesn't like being interfered with, and he was getting to resent programmes being drawn up. Papa is so tremendously keen about anything he takes up that he carries one away; and then *you* come and smooth out all the difficulties. It isn't always easy—" she broke off suddenly, and added, "That is what Jack wants, what he calls something *real*. He is bored with the life here, and yet he is always good about it."

"Do you like the life here?" said Howard. "I

can't tell you what an effect it all produces on me; it all seems so simple and beautiful. But I know that one mustn't trust first impressions. People in picturesque surroundings don't always feel picturesque. It is very pleasant to make a drama out of one's life and to feel romantic—but one can't keep it up—at least I can't. That must come of itself."

Howard felt that the girl was watching him with a look of almost startled interest. She said in a moment, "Yes, that's quite true, and it *is* a difficulty. I should like to be able to talk to you about those things—I hear so much about you, you know, from Jack, that you are not like a stranger at all. Now papa has got the gift of romance; every bit of his life is interesting and exciting to him—it's perfectly splendid—but Jack has not got that at all. I seem to understand them both, and yet I can't explain them to each other. I don't mean they don't get on, but neither can quite see what the other is aiming at. And I have felt that I ought to be able to do something. I can't understand how you have cleared it up; but I am very glad and grateful about it: it has been a trouble to me. Cousin Anne is wonderful about it, but she seems able to let things alone in a way I can't dare to."

"Oh, one learns that as one gets older," said Howard. "One can't argue things straight. One can only go on hoping and wishing, and if possible

understanding. I used to make a great mess of it with my pupils at one time, by thinking one could talk them round; but one can't persuade people of things, one can only just suggest, and let it be; and after all no one ever resents finding himself interesting to some one else; only it has got to be interest, and not a sense of duty."

"That is what Cousin Anne says," said Maud, "and when I am with her, I think so too; and then something tiresome happens and I meddle, I meddle! Jack says I like ruling lines, but that it is no good, because people won't write on them."

X

WITH MAUD ALONE

They were suddenly interrupted by the inrush of the Vicar. "Maud," he said with immense zest, "I find old Mrs. Darby very ill—she had a kind of faint while I was there. I have sent off Bob post haste for Dr. Grierson." The Vicar was evidently in the highest spirits, like a general on the eve of a great battle. "There isn't a moment to be lost," he continued, his eye blazing with energy. "Howard, my dear fellow, I fear our walk must be put off. I must go back at once. There she lies, flat on her back, just where I laid her! I believe," said the Vicar, "it's a touch of syncope. She is blue, decidedly blue! I charged them to do nothing, but if I don't get back, there's no knowing what they won't pour down her throat—decoction of pennyroyal, I dare say; and if the woman coughs, she is lost. This is the sort of thing I enjoy—of course it is very sad—but it is a tussle with death. I know a good deal about medicine, and Grierson has more than once complimented me on my diagnosis—he said it was masterly—forgive a touch of vanity! But you mustn't lose your walk. Maud, dear, you take Howard

out—I am sure he won't mind for once. You could walk round the village, or you could go and find Jack. Now then, back to my post! You must forgive me, Howard, but my flock are paramount."

"But won't you want me, papa?" said Maud. "Couldn't I be of use?"

"Certainly not," said the Vicar; "there's nothing whatever to be done till Grierson arrives—just to ward off the ministrations of the relatives. There she must lie—I feel no doubt it is syncope; every symptom points to syncope—poor soul! A very interesting case."

He fled from the room like a whirlwind, and they heard him run down the garden. The two looked at each other and smiled. "Poor Mrs. Darby!" said Maud, "she is such a nice old woman; but papa will do everything that can be done for her; he really knows all about it, and he is splendid in illness—he never loses his head, and he is very gentle; he has saved several lives in the village by knowing what to do. Would you really like to go out with me? I'll be ready in a minute."

"Let us go up on the downs," said Howard, "I should like that very much. I daresay we shall hear Jack shooting somewhere."

Maud was back in a moment; in a rough cloak and cap she looked enchanting to Howard's eyes. She walked lightly and quickly beside him. "You must take your own pace," said Howard, "I'll try

to keep up—one get's very lazy at Cambridge about exercise—won't you go on with what you were saying? I know your father has told you about my aunt's plan. I can't realise it yet; but I want to feel at home here now—indeed I do feel that already—and I like to know how things stand. We are all relations together, and I must try to make up for lost time. I seem to know my aunt so well already. She has a great gift for letting one see into her mind and heart—and I know your father too, and Jack, and I want to know you; we must be a family party, and talk quite simply and freely about all our concerns."

"Oh, yes, indeed I will," said Maud—"and I find myself wondering how easy it is to talk to you. You do seem like a relation; as if you had always been here, indeed; but I must not talk too much about myself—I do chatter very freely to Cousin Anne; but I don't think it is good for one to talk about oneself, do you? It makes one feel so important!"

"It depends who one talks to," said Howard, "but I don't believe in holding one's tongue too much, if one trusts people. It seems to me the simplest thing to do; I only found it out a few years ago—how much one gained by talking freely and directly. It seems to me an uncivilised, almost a savage thing to be afraid of giving oneself away. I don't mind who knows about my own concerns

if he is sufficiently interested. I will tell you anything you like about myself, because I should like you to realise how I live. In fact, I shall want you all to come and see me at Cambridge; and then you will be able to understand how we live there, while I shall know what is going on here. And I am really a very safe person to talk to. One gets to know a lot of young men, year by year—and I'm a mine of small secrets. Don't you know the title so common in the old Methodist tracts—'The life and death and Christian sufferings of the Rev. Mr. Pennefather.' That's what I want to know about people—Christian sufferings and all."

Maud smiled at him and said, "I am afraid there are not many Christian sufferings in my life; but I shall be glad to talk about many things here. You know my mother died more than ten years ago—when I was quite a little girl—and I don't remember her very well; I have always said just what I thought to Jack, and he to me—till quite lately; and that is what troubles me a little. Jack seems to be rather drifting away from me. He gets to know so many new people, and he doesn't like explaining; and then his mind seems full of new ideas. I suppose it is bound to happen; and of course I have very little to do here; papa likes doing everything, and doing it in his own way. He can't bear to let anything out of his hands; so I just go about and talk to the people. But I

am not a very contented person. I want something, I think, and I don't know what it is. It is difficult to take up anything serious, when one is all alone. I should like to go to Newnham, but I can't leave father by himself; books don't seem much use, though I read a great deal. I want something real to do, like Jack! Papa is so energetic; he manages the house and pays all the bills; and there doesn't seem any use for me—though if I were of use, I should find plenty of things to do, I believe."

"Yes," said Howard, "I quite understand, and I am glad you have told me. You know I am a sort of doctor in these matters, and I have often heard undergraduates say the same sort of thing. They are restless, they want to go out into life, they want to work; and when they begin to work all that disquiet disappears. It's a great mercy to have things to do, whether one likes it or not. Work is an odd thing! There is hardly a morning at Cambridge when, if someone came to me and offered me the choice of doing my ordinary work or doing nothing for a day, I shouldn't choose to do nothing. And yet I enjoy my work, and wouldn't give it up for anything. It is odd that it takes one so long to learn to like work, and longer still to learn that one doesn't like idleness. And yet it is to win the power of being idle that makes most people work. Idleness seems so much grander and more dignified."

"It *is* curious," said Maud, "but I seem to have inherited papa's taste for occupation, without his energy. I wish you would advise me what to do. Can't one find something?"

"What does my aunt say?" said Howard.

"Oh, she smiles in that mysterious way she has," said Maud, "and says we have to learn to take things as they come. She knows somehow how to do without things, how to wait; but I can't do that without getting dreary."

"Do you ever try to write?" said Howard.

"Yes," said Maud, laughing, "I have tried to write a story—how did you guess that? I showed it to Cousin Anne, and she said it was very nice; and when I showed it to Jack, and told him what she had said, he read a little, and said that that was exactly what it was."

"Yes," said Howard, smiling, "I admit that it was not very encouraging! But I wish you would try something more simple. You say you know the people here and talk to them. Can't you write down the sort of things they say, the talks you have with them, the way they look at things? I read a book once like that, called *Country Conversations*, and I wondered that so few people ever tried it. Why should one try to write improbable stories, even *nice* stories, when the thing itself is so interesting? One doesn't understand these country people. They have an idea of life as definite as

a dog or a cat, and it is not in the least like ours. Why not take a family here; describe their house and possessions, what they look like, what they do, what their history has been, and then describe some talks with them? I can't imagine anything more interesting. Perhaps you could not publish them at present; but they wouldn't be quite wasted, because you might show them to me, and I want to know all about the people here. You mustn't pass over things because they seem homely and familiar —those are just the interesting things—what they eat and drink and wear, and all that. How does that strike you?"

"I like the idea very much indeed," said Maud. "I will try—I will begin at once. And even if nothing comes of it, it will be nice to think it may be of use to you, to know about the people."

"Very well," said Howard, "that is a bargain. It is exactly what I want. Do begin at once, and let me have the first instalment of the Chronicles of Windlow."

They had arrived by this time at a point high on the downs. The rough white road, full of flints, had taken them up by deep-hedged cuttings, through coverts where the spring flowers were just beginning to show in the undergrowth, and out on to the smooth turf of the downs. They were near the top now, and they could see right down into Windlow Malzoy, lying like a map beneath them; the

top of the Church tower, its leaden roof, the roofs of the Vicarage, the little straggling street among its orchards and gardens; farther off, up the valley, they could see the Manor in its gardens; beyond the opposite ridge, a far-off view of great richness spread itself in a belt of dark-blue colour. It was a still day; on the left hand there was a great smooth valley-head, with a wood of beeches, and ploughed fields in the bottom. They directed their steps to an old turfed barrow, with a few gnarled thorn trees, wind-swept and stunted round it.

"I love this place," said Maud; "it has a nice name, the 'Isle of Thorns.' I suppose it is a burial-place—some old chief, papa says—and he is always threatening to have him dug up; but I don't want to disturb him! He must have had a reason for being buried here, and I suppose there were people who missed him, and were sorry to lay him here, and wondered where he had gone. I am sure there is a sad old story about it; and yet it makes one happy in a curious way to think about it all."

"Yes," said Howard, "'the old, unhappy, far-off things,' that turn themselves into songs and stories! That is another puzzle; one's own sorrows and tragedies, would one like to think of them as being made into songs for other people to enjoy? I suppose we ought to be glad of it; but there does not seem anything poetical about them

at the time; and yet they end by being sweeter than the old happy things. The 'Isle of Thorns'! Yes, that is a beautiful name."

Suddenly there came a faint musical sound on the air, as sweet as honey. Howard held up his hand. "What on earth or in heaven is that?" he said.

"Those are the chimes of Sherborne!" said Maud. "One hears them like that when the wind is in this quarter. I like to hear them—they have always been to me a sort of omen of something pleasant about to happen. Perhaps it is in your honour to-day, to welcome you!"

"Well," said Howard, "they are beautiful enough by themselves; and if they will bring me greater happiness than I have, I shall not object to that!"

They smiled at each other, and stood in silence for a little, and then Maud pointed out some neighbouring villages. "All this," she said, "is Cousin Anne's—and yours. I think the Isle of Thorns is yours."

"Then the old chief shall not be disturbed," said Howard.

"How curious it is," said Maud, "to see a place of which one knows every inch laid out like a map beneath one. It seems quite a different place! As if something beautiful and strange must be happening there, if only one could see it!"

"Yes," said Howard, "it is odd how we lose the feeling that a place is romantic when we come to

know it. When I first went up to Cambridge, there were many places there that seemed to me to be so interesting: walls which seemed to hide gardens full of thickets, strange doorways by which no one ever passed out or in, barred windows giving upon dark courts, out of which no one ever seemed to look. But now that I know them all from the inside, they seem commonplace enough. The hidden garden is a place where Dons smoke and play bowls; the barred window is an undergraduate's gyp-room; there's no mystery left about them now. This place as I see it to-day—well, it seems the most romantic place in the world, full of unutterable secrets of life and death; but I suppose it may all come to wear a perfectly natural air to me some day."

"That is what I like so much about Cousin Anne," said Maud; "nothing seems to be commonplace to her, and she puts back the mystery and wonder into it all. One must learn to do that for oneself somehow."

"Yes, she's a great woman!" said Howard; "but what shall we do now?"

"Oh, I am sorry," said Maud, "I have been keeping you all this time—wouldn't you like to go and look for Jack? I think I heard a shot just now up the valley."

"No," said Howard, looking at her and smiling, "we won't go and look for Jack to-day; he has quite enough of my company. I want your com-

pany to-day, and only yours. I want to get used to my new-found cousin."

"And to get rid of the sense of romance about her?" said Maud with a smile; "you will soon come to the end of me."

"I will take my chance of that," said Howard. "At present I feel on the other side of the wall."

"But I don't," said Maud, laughing; "I can't think how you slip in and fit in as you do, and disentangle all our little puzzles as you have done. I thought I should be terrified of you—and now I feel as if I had known you ever so long. You are like Cousin Anne, you know."

"Perhaps I am, a little," said Howard, "but you are not very much like Jack! Show me Mrs. Darby's house, by the way. I wonder how things are going."

"There it is," said Maud, pointing to a house not far from the Vicarage, "and there is Dr. Grierson's dogcart. I am afraid I had not been thinking about her; but I do hope it's all right. I think she will get over this. Don't you always have an idea, when people are ill, whether they will get well or not?"

"Yes," said Howard, "I do; but it doesn't always come right!"

They lingered long on the hill, and at last Maud said that she must return for tea. "Papa will be sure to bring Dr. Grierson in."

They went down the hill, talking lightly and easily; and to Howard it was more delightful than anything he had known to have a peep into the girl's frank and ingenuous mind. She was full of talk—spontaneous, inconsequent talk—like Jack; and yet with a vast difference. Hers was not a wholly happy temperament, Howard thought; she seemed oppressed by a sense of duty, and he could not help feeling that she needed some sort of outlet. Neither the Vicar nor Jack were people who stood in need of sympathy or affection. He felt that they did not quite understand the drift of the girl's mind, which seemed clear enough to him. And yet there fell on him, for all his happiness, a certain dissatisfaction. He would have liked to feel less elderly, less paternal; and the girl's frank confidence in him, treating him as she might have treated an uncle or an elder brother, was at once delightful and disconcerting. The day began to decline as they walked, and the light faded to a sombre bleakness. Howard went back to the Vicarage with her, and, at her urgent request, went in to tea. They found the Vicar and Dr. Grierson already established. Mrs. Darby was quite comfortable, and no danger was apprehended. The Vicar's diagnosis had been right, and his precautions perfect. "I could not have done better myself!" said Dr. Grierson, a kindly, bluff Scotchman. Howard became aware that the Vicar must have

told the Doctor the news about his inheritance, and was subtly flattered at being treated by him with the *empressement* reserved for squires. Jack came in —he had been shooting all afternoon—and told Howard he was improving. "I shall catch you up," he said. He seemed frankly amused at the idea of Howard having spent the afternoon with Maud. "You have got the whole family on your back, it seems," he said. Maud was silent, but in her heightened colour and sparkling eye Howard discerned a touch of happiness, and he enjoyed the quiet attention she gave to his needs. The Vicar seemed sorry that they had not made a closer inspection of the village. "But you were right to begin with a general *coup d'œil*," he said; "the whole before the parts! First the conspectus, then the details," he added delightedly. "So you have been to the Isle of Thorns?" he went on. "I want to rake out the old fellow up there some day—but Cousin Anne won't allow it—you must persuade her; and we will have a splendid field-day there, unearthing all the old boy's arrangements; I am sure he has never been disturbed."

"I am afraid I agree with my aunt," said Howard, shaking his head.

"Ah, Maud has been getting at you, I perceive," said the Vicar. "A very feminine view! Now in the interests of ethnology we ought to go forward—dear me, how full the world is of interesting things!"

They parted in great good-humour. The whole party were to dine at the Manor next day; and Howard, as he said good-bye to Maud, contrived to add, "Now you must tell me to-morrow that you have made a beginning." She gave him a little nod, and a clasp of the hand that made him feel that he had a new friend.

That evening he talked to his aunt about Maud. He told her all about their walk and talk. "I am very glad you gave her something to do," she said—"that is so like a man! That is just where I fail. She is a very interesting and delightful girl, Howard; and she is not quite happy at home. Living with Cousin Frank is like living under a waterfall; and Jack is beginning to have his own plans, and doesn't want anyone to share them. Well, you amaze me! I suppose you get a good deal of practice in these things, and become a kind of amateur father-confessor. I think of you at Cambridge as setting the lives of young men spinning like little tops—small human teetotums. It's very useful, but it is a little dangerous? I don't think you have suffered as yet. That's what I like in you, Howard, the mixture of practical and unpractical. You seem to me to be very busy, and yet to know where to stop. Of course we can't make other people a present of experience; they have to spin their own webs; but I think one can do a certain amount in seeing that they have experience. It would not

suit me; my strength is to sit still, as the Bible says. But in a place like this with Frank whipping his tops—he whips them, while you just twirl them —someone is wanted who will listen to people, and see that they are left alone. To leave people alone at the right minute is a very great necessity. Don't you know those gardens that look as if they were always being fussed and slashed and cut about? There's no sense of life in them. One has to slash sometimes, and then leave it. I believe in growth even more than in organisation. Still, I don't doubt that you have helped Maud, and I am very glad of it. I wanted you to make friends with her. I think the lack in your life is that you have known so few women; men and women can never understand each other, of course; but they have got to live together and work together; and one ought to live with people whom one does not understand. You and your undergraduates don't yield any mysteries. You, no doubt, know exactly what they are thinking, and they know what you are thinking. It's all very pleasant and wholesome, but one can't get on very far that way. You mustn't think Maud is a sort of undergraduate. Probably you think you know a great deal about her already —but she isn't the least what you imagine, any more than I am. Nor are you what I imagine; but I am quite content with my mistaken idea of you."

XI

JACK

The next day's dinner was a disappointment. The Vicar expatiated, Jack counted, and became so intent on his counting that he hardly said a word; indeed Howard was not sure that he was wholly pleased with the turn affairs had taken; he was rather touched by this than otherwise, because it seemed to him that Jack was really, if unconsciously, a little jealous. His whole visit had been rather too much of a success: Jack had expected to act as showman of his menagerie, and to play the principal part; and Howard felt that Jack suspected him of having taken the situation too much into his own hands. He felt that Jack was not pleased with his puppets; his father had needed no apologies or explanations, Maud had been forward, he himself had been donnish.

The result was that Howard hardly got a word with Maud; she did indeed say to him that she had made a beginning, and he was aware of a pleasant sense of trustfulness about her; but the party had been involved in vague and general talk, with a disturbing element somewhere. Howard found himself talking aimlessly and flatly, and the net result was a feeling of dissatisfaction.

When they were gone, Mrs. Graves said to Howard, "Jack is rather a masterful young man, I think. He has no sense of respect in his composition. Were you aware of the fact that he had us all under his thumb this evening?"

"Yes," said Howard, "it was just what I was thinking!"

"He wants work," said Mrs. Graves; "he ought not to dangle about at home and at Cambridge; he wants tougher material to deal with; it's no use snubbing him, because he is on the right tack; but he must not be allowed to interfere too much. He wants a touch of misfortune to bring him to himself; he has a real influence over people—the influence that all definite, good-humoured, outspoken people have; it is easier for others to do what he likes than to resist him; he is not irritable, and he is pertinacious. He is the sort of man who may get very much spoilt if he doesn't marry the right woman, because he is the sort of person women will tell lies to rather than risk displeasing him. If he does not take care he will be a man of the world, because he will not see the world as it is; it will behave to him as he wishes it to behave."

"I think," said Howard, "that he has got good stuff in him; he would never do anything mean or spiteful; but he would do anything that he thought consistent with honour to get his way."

"Well, we shall see," said Mrs. Graves; "but he

is rather a bad influence for Maud just now. Maud doesn't suspect his strength, and I can't have her broken in. Mind, Howard, I look to you to help Maud along. You have a gift for keeping things reasonable; and you must use it."

"I thought you believed in letting people alone!" said Howard.

"In theory, yes," said Mrs. Graves, smiling; "I certainly don't believe in influencing people; but I believe very much in loving them: it's what I call imaginative sympathy that we want. Some people have imagination enough to see what other people are feeling, but it ends there: and some people have unintelligent sympathy, and that is only spoiling. But one must see what people are capable of, and what their line is, and help them to find out what suits them, not try to conform them to what suits oneself; and that isn't as easy as it sounds."

XII

DIPLOMACY

A FEW days later Howard was summoned back to Cambridge. One of his colleagues was ill, and arrangements had to be made to provide for his work. It astonished him to find how reluctant he was to return; he seemed to have found the sort of life he needed in this quiet place. He had walked with the Vicar, and had been deluged with interesting particulars about the parish. Much of it was very trivial, but Howard saw that the Vicar had a real insight into the people and their ways. He had not seen Maud again to speak to, and it vexed him to find how difficult it was to create occasions for meeting. His mind and imagination had been taken captive by the girl; he thought of her constantly, and recalled her in a hundred charming vignettes; the hope of meeting her was constantly in his mind; he had taught Jack a good deal, but he became more and more aware that for some reason or other his pupil was not pleased with him.

He and Jack were returning one day from fishing, and they had come nearer than Howard had liked to having a squabble. Howard had said something

about an undergraduate, a friend of Jack's. Jack had seemed to resent the criticism, and said, "I am not quite sure whether you know so much about him as you think. Do you always analyse people like that? I sometimes feel with you as if I were in a room full of specimens which you were showing off, and that you knew more about them dead than alive."

"That's rather severe!" said Howard; "I simply try to understand people—I suppose we all do that."

"No, I don't," said Jack; "I think it's rather stuffy, if you want to know. I have a feeling that you have been turning everyone inside out here. I think one ought to let people alone."

"Well," said Howard, "it all depends upon what one wants to do with people. I think that, as a matter of fact, you are really more inclined to deal with people, to use them for your own purposes, than I am. You know what you want, and other people have got to follow. Of course, up at Beaufort, it's my business to try to do that to a certain extent; but that is professional, and a matter of business."

"But the worst of doing it professionally," said Jack, "is that you can't get out of the way of doing it unprofessionally. You seem to me to have rather purchased this place. I know you are to be squire, and all that; but you want to make yourself felt. I am not sure that you aren't rather a Jesuit."

"Come," said Howard, "that's going too far —we can't afford to quarrel. I don't mind your saying what you think; but if you have the right to take your own line, you must allow the same right to others."

"That depends!" said Jack, and was silent for a moment. Then he turned to Howard and said, "Yes, you are quite right! I am sorry I said all that. You have done no end for me, and I am an ungrateful little beast. It is rather fine of you not to remind me of all the trouble you have taken; there isn't anyone who would have done so much; and you have really laid yourself out to do what I liked here. I am sorry, I am truly sorry. I suppose I felt myself rather cock of the walk here, and am vexed that you have got the whole thing into your hands!"

"All right," said Howard, "I entirely understand; and look here, I am glad you said what you did. You are not wholly wrong. I have interfered perhaps more than I ought; but you must believe me when I say this—that it isn't with a managing motive. I like people to like me; I don't want to direct them; only one can overdo trying to make people like one, and I feel I have overdone it. I ought to have gone to work in a different way."

"Well, I have put my foot in it again," said Jack; "it's awful to think that I have been lecturing one

of the Dons about his duty. I shall be trying to brighten up their lives next. The mischief is that I don't think I do want people to like me. I am not affectionate. I only want things to go smoothly."

They drew near to the Manor, and Jack said, "I promised Cousin Anne I would go in to tea. She has designs on me, that woman! She doesn't approve of me; she says the sharpest things in her quiet way; one hardly knows she has done it, and then when one thinks of it afterwards, one finds she has drawn blood. I am cross, I think! There seems to be rather a set at me just now; she makes me feel as if I were in bed, being nursed and slapped."

"Well," said Howard, "I shall leave you to her mercies. I shall go on to the Vicarage, and say good-bye. I shan't see them again this time. You don't mind, I hope? I will try not to use my influence."

"You can't help it!" said Jack with a grimace. "No, do go. You will touch them up a bit. I am not appreciated there just now."

Howard walked on up to the Vicarage. He was rather disturbed by Jack's remarks; it put him, he thought, in an odious light. Was he really so priggish and Jesuitical? That was the one danger of the life of the Don which he hoped he had successfully avoided. He was all for liberty, he

imagined. Was he really, after all, a mild schemer with an ethical outlook? Was he bent on managing and uplifting people? The idea sickened him, and he felt humiliated.

When he arrived at the Vicarage, he found the Vicar out. Maud was alone. This was, he confessed to himself with a strange delight, exactly what he most desired. He would not be paternal or formative. He would just make friends with his pretty cousin as he might with a sensible undergraduate. With this stern resolve he entered the room.

Maud got up hastily from her chair—she was writing in a little note-book on her knee. "I thought I would just come in and say good-bye," he said. "I have to go back to Cambridge earlier than I thought, and I hoped I might just catch you and your father."

"He will be so sorry," said Maud; "he does enjoy meeting you. He says it gives him so much to think about."

"Oh, well," said Howard, "I hope to be here again next vacation—in June, that is. I have got to learn my duties here as soon as I can. I see you are hard at work. Is that the book? How do you get on? You have promised to send it me, you know, as soon as you have enough in hand."

"Yes," said Maud, "I will send it you. It has done me good already, doing this. It is very good

of you to have suggested it—and I like to think it may be of some use."

"I have been with Jack all the afternoon," said Howard, "and I am afraid he is rather vexed with me. I can't have that. He drew a rather unpleasant picture of me; he seemed to think I have taken this place rather in hand from the Don's point of view. He thinks I should die if I were unable to improve the occasion."

Maud looked up at him with a troubled and rather indignant air. "Jack is perfectly horrid just now," she said; "I can't think what has come over him; and considering that you have been coaching him every day, and getting him shooting and fishing, it seems to me quite detestable! I oughtn't to say that; but you mustn't be angry with him, Mr. Kennedy. I think he is feeling very independent just now, and he said to me that it made him feel that he was back at school to have to go up with his books to the Manor every morning. But he is all right really. I am sure he *is* grateful; it would be too shameful if he were not. Please don't be vexed with him."

Howard laughed. "Oh, I am not vexed! Indeed, I am rather glad he spoke out—at my age one doesn't often get the chance of being sincerely scolded by a perfectly frank young man. One does get donnish and superior, no doubt, and it is useful to find it out, though it isn't pleasant at the time.

We have made it up, and he was quite repentant; I think it is altogether natural. It often happens with young men to get irritated with one, no doubt, but as a rule they don't speak out; and this time he has got me between the joints of my armour."

"Oh, dear me!" said Maud, "I think the world is rather a difficult place! It seems ridiculous for me to say that in a place like this, when I think what might be happening if I were poor and had to earn my living. It is silly to mind things so; but Jack accuses me of the same sort of thing. He says that women can't let people alone; he says that women don't really want to *do* anything, but only to *seem* to have their way."

"Well, then, it appears we are both in the same box," said Howard, "and we must console each other and grieve over being so much misunderstood."

He felt that he had spoken rather cynically, and that he had somehow hurt and checked the girl. He did not like the thought; but he felt that he had spoken sensibly in not allowing the situation to become sentimental. There was a little silence; and then Maud said, rather timidly: "Do you like going back?"

"No," said Howard, "I don't. I have become curiously interested in this place, and I am lazy. Just now the life of the Don seems to me rather intolerable. I don't want to teach Greek prose,

I don't want to go to meetings; I don't want to gossip about appointments, and little intrigues, and bonfires, and College rows. I want to live here, and walk on the Downs and write my book. I don't want to be stuffy, as Jack said. But it will be all right, when I have taken the plunge; and after I have been back a week, this will all fade into a sort of impossibly pleasant dream."

He was again conscious that he had somehow hurt the girl. She looked at him with a troubled face, and then said, "Yes, that is the advantage which men have. I sometimes wonder if it would not be better for me to have some work away from here. But there is nothing I could do; and I can't leave papa."

"Oh, it will all come right!" said Howard feebly; "there are fifty things that might happen. And now I must be off! Mind, you must let me have the book some time; that will serve to remind me of Windlow in the intervals of Greek prose."

He got up and shook hands. He felt he was behaving stupidly and unkindly. He had meant to tell Maud how much he liked the feeling of having made friends, and to have talked to her frankly and simply about everything. He had an intense desire to say that and more; to make her understand that she was and would be in his thoughts; to ascertain how she felt towards him; to assure himself of their friendship. But he would

be wise and prudent; he would not be sentimental or priggish or Jesuitical. He would just leave the impression that he was mildly interested in Windlow, but that his heart was in his work. He felt sustained by his delicate consideration, and by his judicious chilliness. And so he turned and left her, though an unreasonable impulse seized him to take the child in his arms, and tell her how sweet and delicious she was. She had held the little book in her hand as they sate, as if she had hoped he would ask to look at it; and as he closed the door, he saw her put it down on the table with a half-sigh.

XIII

GIVING AWAY

He was to go off the next day; that night he had his last talk to his aunt. She said that she would say good-bye to him then, and that she hoped he would be back in June. She did not seem quite as serene as usual, but she spoke very affectionately and gently of the delight his visit had been. Then she said, "But I somehow feel—I can't give my reasons—as if we had got into a mess here. You are rather a disturbing element, dear Howard! I may speak plainly to you now, mayn't I? I think you have more effect on people than you know. You have upset us! I am not criticising you, because you have exceeded all my hopes. But you are too diffident, and you don't realise your power of sympathy. You are very observant, very quick to catch the drift of people's moods, and you are not at all formidable. You are so much interested in people that you lead them to reveal themselves and to betray themselves; and they don't find quite what they expect. You are afraid, I think, of caring for people; you want to be in close relation with everyone, and yet to preserve your own tranquillity. You are afraid of emotion;

but one can't care for people like that! It doesn't cost you enough! You are like a rich man who can afford to pay for things, and I think you rather pauperise people. Here you have been for three weeks; and nobody here will be able to forget you; and yet I think you may forget us. One can't care without suffering, and I think that you don't suffer. It is all a pleasure and delight to you. You win hearts, and don't give your own. Don't think I am ungrateful. You have made a great difference already to my life; but you have made me suffer too. I know that like Telemachus in Tennyson's poem you will be 'decent not to fail in offices of tenderness'—I know I can depend on you to do everything that is kind and considerate and just. You won't disappoint me. You will do out of a natural kindliness and courtesy what many people can only do by loving. You don't claim things, you don't lay hands on things; and it looks so like unselfishness that it seems detestable of me to say anything. But you will have to give yourself away, and I don't think you have ever done that. I can say all this, my dear, because I love you, as a mother might; you are my son indeed; but there is something in you that will have to be broken; we have all of us to be broken. It isn't that you have anything to repent of. You would take endless trouble to help anyone who wanted help, you would be endlessly patient and tender

and strong; but you do not really know what love means, because it does not hurt or wound you. You are like Achilles, was it not, who had been dipped in the river of death, and you are invulnerable. You won't, I know, resent my saying this? I know you won't—and the fact that you will not makes it harder for me to say it—but I almost wish it *would* wound you, instead of making you think how you can amend it. You can't amend it, but God and love can; only you must dare to let yourself go. You must not be wise and forbearing. There, dear, I won't say more!"

Howard took her hand and kissed it. "Thank you," he said, "thank you a hundred times for speaking so. It is perfectly true, every word of it. It is curious that to-day I have been myself three times mirrored in other minds. I don't like what I see—I am not complacent—I am not flattered. But I don't know what to do! I feel like a patient with a hopeless disease, who has been listening to a perfectly kind and wise physician. But what can I do? It is just the vital impulse which is lacking. I will be frank too; it is quite true that I live in the surface of things. I am so much interested in books, ideas, thoughts, I am fascinated by the study of human temperament; people delight me, excite me, amuse me; but nothing ever comes inside. I don't excuse myself, but I say: 'It is He that hath made us and not we ourselves.' I am just so,

as you have described, and I feel what a hollow-hearted sort of person I am. Yet I go on amusing myself with friendships and interests. I have never suffered, and I have never loved. Well, I would like to change all that, but can I ? "

" Ah, dear Howard," said his aunt, " that is the everlasting question. It is like you to take this all so sweetly and to speak so openly. But further than this no one can help you. You are like the young man whom Jesus loved who had great possessions. You do not know how much ! I will not tell you to follow Him ; and your possessions are not those which can be given away. But you must follow love. I had a hope, I have a hope—oh, it is more than that, because we all find our way sooner or later—and now that you know the truth, as I see you know it, the light will not be long in coming. God bless you, dearest child ; there is pain ahead of you ; but I don't fear that—pain is not the worst thing or the last thing ! "

XIV

BACK TO CAMBRIDGE

"I HAD a hope . . . I have a hope," these words of his aunt's echoed often through Howard's brain, in the wakeful night which followed. Nothing was plain to himself except the fact that things were tangled; the anxious exaltation which came to him from his talk with his aunt cleared off like the dying away of the flush of some beaded liquor. "I must see into this—I must understand what is happening—I must disentangle it," he said again and again to himself. He was painfully conscious, as he thought and thought, of his own deep lack both of moral courage and affection. He liked nothing that was not easy—easy triumph, easy relations. Somehow the threads of life had knotted themselves up; he had slipped so lightly into his place here, he had taken up responsibilities as he might have taken up a flower; he had meant to be what he called frank and affectionate all round, and now he felt that he was going to disappoint everyone. Not till the daylight began to outline the curtain-rifts did he fall asleep; and he woke with that excited fatigue which comes of sleeplessness.

He came down, he breakfasted alone in the early

morning freshness. The house was all illumined by the sun, but it spread its beauties in vain before him. The trap came to the door, and when he came out he found to his surprise that Jack was standing on the steps talking to the coachman. "I thought I would like to come to the station with you," said Jack. Howard was pleased at this. They got in together, and one by one the scenes so strangely familiar fled past them. Howard looked long at the Vicarage as he passed, wondering whether Maud was perhaps looking out. That had been a clumsy, stupid business—his talk with her! Presently Jack said, "Look here, I am going to say again that I was perfectly hateful yesterday. I don't know what came over me—I was thinking aloud."

"Oh, it doesn't matter a bit!" said Howard; "it was my fault really. I have mismanaged things, I think; and it is good for me to find that out."

"No, but you haven't," said Jack. "I see it all now. You came down here, and you made friends with everyone. That was all right; the fact simply is that I have been jealous and mean. I expected to have you all to myself—to run you, in fact; and I was vexed at finding you take an interest in all the others. There, it's better out. I am entirely in the wrong. You have been awfully good all round, and we shall be precious dull now

that you are going. The truth is that we have been squabbling over you."

"Well, Jack," said Howard, smiling, "it's very good of you to say this. I can't quite accept it, but I am very grateful. There *was* some truth in what you said—but it wasn't quite the whole truth; and anyhow you and I won't squabble—I shouldn't like that!"

Jack nodded and smiled, and they went on to talk of other things; but Howard was pleased to see that the boy hung about him, determined to make up for his temper, looked after his luggage, saw him into the train, and waved him a very ingenuous farewell, with a pretence of tears.

The journey passed in a listless dream for Howard, but everything faded before the thought of Maud. What could he do to make up for his brutality? He could not see his way clear. He had a sense that it was unfair to claim her affection, to sentimentalise; and he thought that he had been doubly wrong—wrong in engaging her interest so quickly, wrong in playing on her unhappiness just for his own enjoyment, and doubly wrong in trying to disengage their relation so roughly. It was a mean business; and yet though he did not want to hold her, he could not bear to let her go.

As he came near Cambridge and in sight of the familiar landscape, the wide fields, the low lines of far-off wolds, he was surprised to find that instead

of being depressed, a sense of comfort stole over him, and a feeling of repose. He had crammed too many impressions and emotions into his visit; and now he was going back to well-known and peaceful activities. The sight of his rooms pleased him, and the foregathering with the three or four of his colleagues was a great relief. Mr. Redmayne was incisive and dogmatic, but evidently pleased to see him back. He had not been away, and professed that holidays and change of scene were distracting and exhausting. "It takes me six weeks to recover from a holiday," he said. He had had an old friend to stay with him, a country parson, and he had apparently spent his time in elaborate manœuvres to see as little of his guest as possible. "A worthy man, but tedious," he said, "wonderfully well preserved—in body, that is; his mind has entirely gone to pieces; he has got some dismal notions in his head about the condition of the agricultural poor; he thinks they want uplifting! Now I am all for the due subordination of classes. The poor are there, if I may speak plainly, to breed—that is their first duty; and their only other duty that I can discover, is to provide for the needs of men of virtue and intelligence!"

Later on, Howard was left alone with him, and thought that it would please the old man to tell him of the change in his own position.

"I am delighted to hear it," said Mr. Redmayne:

"a landed proprietor, that's a very comfortable thing! Now how will that affect your position here? Ah yes, I see—only the heir-apparent at present. Well, you will probably find that the estate has all been run on very sentimental lines by your worthy aunt. You take my advice, and put it all on a business-like footing. Let it be clear from the first that you won't stand any nonsense. Ideas!" said Mr. Redmayne in high disdain, "that's the curse of the country. Ideas everywhere, about the empire, about civic rights and duties, about religion, about art"—he made a long face as though he had swallowed medicine. "Let us all keep our distance and do our work. Let us have no nonsense about the brotherhood of man. I hope with all my heart, Howard, that you won't permit anything of that kind. I don't feel as sure of you as I should like; but this will be a very good thing for you, if it shows you that all this stuff will not do in practice. I'm an honest Whig. Let everyone have a vote, and let them give their votes for the right people, and then we shall get on very well."

XV

JACK'S ESCAPADE

The college slowly filled; the term began; Howard went back to his work, and the perplexities of Windlow rather faded into the background. He would behave very differently when he went there next. It should all be cool, friendly, unemotional. But in spite of everything, his aunt's words came sometimes into his mind, troubling it with a sudden thrill. "Power, spirit, the development of life," —were these real things, had one somehow to put oneself into touch with them? Was the life of serene and tranquil work but marking time, wasting opportunity? Had one somehow to be stirred into action and reality? Was there something in the background, which did not insist or drive or interfere with one's inclinations, because it knew that it would be obeyed and yielded to some time? Was it just biding its time, waiting, impelling but not forcing one to change? It gave him an impulse to look closer at his own views and aims, to consider what his motives really were, how far he could choose, how much he could prevail, to what extent he could really do as he hoped and desired. He was often haunted by a sense of living in a mechani-

cal unreality, of moving simply on lines of easy habit. That was a tame, a flat business, perhaps; but it was what seemed to happen.

And yet all the time he was more and more haunted by the thought of Maud. He could not get her out of his head. Over and over again he lived through the scenes of their meetings. Against the background of the dusk, that slender figure outlined itself, the lines of her form, her looks, her smiles; he went again and again through his talks with her—the walk on the down, the sight of her in the dimly-lighted room; he could hear the very tones of her low voice, and see the childlike appeal of her eyes. Worst of all the scene at the Vicarage, the book held in her slender fingers, her look of bewilderment and distress—what a pompous ass he had been, how stupid and coarse! He thought of writing to her; he did write—but the dignified patronage of his elder-brotherly style sickened him, and he tore up his unfinished letter. Why could he not simply say that he cared for her, and was miserable at having hurt her? That was just, he thought, what he must not do; and yet the idea that she might be making other friends and acquaintances was a jealous horror to him. He thought of writing to his aunt about it—he did write regularly to her, but he could not explain what he had done. Strangest of all, he hardly recognised it as love. He did not face the idea of

a possible life with Maud. It was to be an amiable and brotherly relation, with a frank confidence and an outspoken affection. He lost his old tranquil spirits in these reveries. It was painful to him to find how difficult it was becoming to talk to the undergraduates; his mild and jocose ironies seemed to have deserted him. He saw little of Jack; they were elaborately unaffected with each other, but each felt that there had been a sort of exposure, and it seemed impossible to regain the old relation.

One morning he had an unpleasant surprise. The Dean of the College, Mr. Gretton, a tall, rather grimly handsome man, who was immensely conscientious and laborious, and did his work as well as a virtuous man could, who was not interested in education, and frankly bored by the irresponsibility of undergraduates, walked into his rooms one morning and said, "I hope I don't interrupt you? I want to have a word with you about Sandys, as he is your cousin. There was a dinner in College last night—a club, I think—Guthrie and that lot—and Sandys got undeniably drunk. They were making a horrible row about two o'clock, and I went down and dispersed them. There were some outside men there whose names I took; but Sandys was quite out of control, and spoke very impertinently to me. He must come and apologise, or I shall ask that he may be sent down. He is a respectable man on the whole, so I shall not push

it to extremes. But he will be gated, of course, and I shall write to his father. I thought you had better see him, and try if you can do anything. It is a great nuisance, and the less said about it the better; but of course we can't stand this kind of thing, and it had better be stopped at once."

"Yes, I will see him at once," said Howard. "I am very sorry. I did not think he would play the fool like that."

"One never knows!" said the Dean; "to speak plainly, I don't think he is doing much good here. Rather too much a man of the world for my taste. But there is nothing particular against him, and I don't want to be hard on him."

Howard sent for Jack at once. He came in, in an obviously rebellious frame of mind.

"I know," he said. "Yes, of course I was a fool; but it isn't worth making a row about. I don't go in for soaking, like some of the men who don't get caught, and I have no intention of going to the bad, if that is what you mean."

"You are an ass!" said Howard, "a real ass! Now don't say a word yet, till I have told you what I think. You may have your say afterwards. I don't care twopence about your getting drunk once in a way. It's a stupid thing to do, to my mind, and I don't see the point of it. I don't consider you a reprobate, nor am I going to take a high line about drunkenness; I know perfectly well

that you are no more likely to take to drink than the Master is. But it isn't good enough. You put yourself on the wrong side, you give people a wrong idea of yourself. You get disapproved of by all the stupid and ordinary people who don't know you. Your father will be in an awful state of mind. It's an experiment, I suppose? I imagine you thought you would like to see how it felt to be drunk? Well, living at close quarters like this, that sort of thing can't be done. And then you were rude to Gretton. What's the point of that? He is a very good fellow, minds his own business, doesn't interfere, and keeps things very straight here. That part of it seems to me simply ungentlemanly. And in any case, you have no business to hurt the people who care for you, even if you think they ought not to be distressed. I don't say it is immoral, but I say it is a low business from beginning to end."

Jack, who bore signs of his overnight experience, gave Howard a smile. "That's all right!" he said. "I don't object to that! You have rather taken the wind out of my sails. If you had said I was a sensual brute, I should have just laughed. It is such *nonsense* the way these men go on! Why I was lunching with Gretton the other day, and Corry told a story about Wordsworth as an undergraduate getting drunk in Milton's rooms at Christ's, and how proud the old man was of it to

the end of his life. Gretton laughed, and thought it a joke; and then when one gets roaring drunk, they turn up their eyes and say it is unmanly and so on. Why can't they stick to one line? If you go to bump-suppers and dinners, and just manage to carry your liquor, they think you a good sort of fellow, with no sort of nonsense about you—'a little natural boyish excitement'—you know the sort of rot. One glass more, and you are among the sinners."

"I know," said Howard, "and I perceive that I have had the benefit of your thought-out oration after all!"

Jack smiled rather sheepishly, and then said, "Well, what's to be done? Am I to be sent down?"

"Not if you do the right thing," said Howard. "You must just go to Gretton and say you are very sorry you got drunk, and still more sorry you were impertinent. If you can contrive to show him that you think him a good fellow, and are really vexed to have been such a bounder, so much the better. That I leave to your natural eloquence. But you will be gated, and he will write to your father."

Jack whistled. "I say, can't you stop that?" he said. "Father will be fearfully upset."

"No, I can't," said Howard, "and I wouldn't if I could. This is the music, and you have got to face it."

"Very well," said Jack rather glumly, "I suppose I must pay the score. I'll go and grovel to Gretton. I was simply beastly to him. My frank nature expanded in his presence."

Howard laughed. "Well, be off with you!" he said. "And I will tell you what. I will write to your father, and tell him what I think."

"Then it will be all right," said Jack, greatly relieved. "Anything to stop the domestic howl. I'll write too. After all, it is rather convenient to have a cousin among the Dons; and, anyhow, you have had your innings now. I was a fool, I admit. It won't happen again."

Howard wrote at once to the Vicar, and was rewarded by a long and grateful letter. "It is a disreputable affair," he wrote, "and it has upset me very much, and Maud even more. But you have put it in the right light, and I am very grateful to you for your good offices. I couldn't have believed it of Jack, but I look back to dear old Pembroke, and I remember there was one occasion—but I need not revive ancient memories, and I am sufficiently versed in human nature not to waste indignation over a boyish escapade. I have ventured to address letters to Mr. Gretton and the Master on the subject, apologising for Jack's misdemeanour, and saying how much I appreciate the excellence of the tone that prevails in the College."

What, however, pleased Howard still more was

that Gretton spoke to him after Hall and said, "I am much obliged to you, Kennedy, for your prompt action. Sandys came and apologised to me in a very proper manner, and entirely removed the disagreeable impression from my mind. I owe this to your kindly intervention; and I must honestly say that I thought well of Sandys. He did not attempt to excuse himself, or to extenuate his fault. He showed very good feeling, and I believe that henceforth his influence will be on the side of order. I was really pleased with him."

Howard spoke to Jack again the following day, and said he was glad he had done the thing thoroughly.

"Thoroughly?" said Jack; "I should think I did. I fairly licked the old man's boots. We had quite an affecting scene. I rather think he gave me his blessing, and I went away feeling that I had been almost recommended to repeat my performance. Gretton's a sensible man. This is a good College. The thing would have been mismanaged anywhere else; but now I have not only an unblemished character, but I am like gold tried in the furnace."

"One more thing," said Howard; "why not get your people to come up for two or three days? It will clear off the whole affair. I think they would like to be asked, and I should be very glad to help to look after them."

"It will be a bore," said Jack, making a grimace;

"it wrecks my health to take people round to King's and Trinity. It simply knocks me up; but I expect you are right, and I will ask them. You won't fail me? When I go off duty, you will go on? If that is clearly understood, they shall come. I know Maud would like to realise my background, as she says; and my father will rush to the 'Varsity Library, and break the spirit of the Pemmer Dons. He'll have the time of his life; but he deserves a treat—he really wrote me a very decent letter. By George, though, these emotional experiences are not in my line, though they reveal the worth of suffering, as the Chaplain said in his Hospital Sermon last Sunday."

Howard wrote a further note, saying that he hoped that Mr. Sandys and Maud would be able to come; and it was soon arranged that they should spend the inside of a week at Cambridge, before the May week, as the Vicar said he had little taste for social pleasures, and had some matters of considerable importance to turn up in the Library, to say nothing of the intellectual stimulus he anticipated.

XVI

THE VISIT

The visit began on the usual lines of such visits, the home team, so to speak—Howard and Jack—having to fit in a round of festivities into a life which under normal circumstances was already, if anything, too full, with the result that, at all events, Howard's geniality was tense, and tended to be forced. Only in youth can one abandon oneself to high spirits; as one grows older one desires more to contemplate one's own mirth, and assure oneself that it is genuine.

Jack met them at the station, and they had tea in his rooms, Howard refusing firmly to come.

"You must just give them a chance of a private word or two!" he said.

"Why, that's exactly what I want to avoid!" said Jack. "Besides, my family is never private—we haven't any company manners. But I expect you are right. Father will want one innings, and I think it's fair he should have it!"

They were, however, to dine with Howard, who, contrary to his wont, lavished some care on flowers and decorations, to make the place unobtrusively pretty and home-like, and he determined that he

would be as quiet and straightforward as he could, but promised himself at least one afternoon with Maud strolling round the place. But this was all to happen as if by chance, and with no scheming or diplomacy.

They came; and Howard saw at once that Maud was timid and somewhat out of spirits; she looked tired, and this, so far from diminishing her charm, seemed to Howard to make it almost intolerably appealing to him. He would have desired to take her in his arms, like a child, to pet and caress her into happiness. Jack was evidently feeling the weight of his responsibilities, and was frankly bored; but never had Howard been more grateful for Mr. Sandys' flow of spirits than he was that evening. Mr. Sandys was thirsting for experience and research, and he was also in a state of jubilant sentimentality about Cambridge and his old recollections. He told stories of the most unemphatic kind in the most emphatic way, and Howard was amused at the radiant hues with which the lapse of time had touched the very simplest incidents of his career. Mr. Sandys had been, it seemed, a terrible customer at Cambridge—disobedient, daring, incisive, the hero of his contemporaries, the dread of the authorities; but all this on high-minded lines. Moreover, he had brought with him a note-book of queries, to be settled in the Library; while he had looked up in the list of resi-

dents everyone with whom he had been in the remotest degree acquainted, and a long vista of calls opened out before him. It was a very delightful evening to Howard, in spite of everything, simply because Maud was there; and he found himself extraordinarily conscious of her presence, observant of all she said and did, glad that her eyes should rest upon his familiar setting; and when they sat afterwards in his study and smoked, he saw that her eyes travelled with a curious intentness over everything—his books, his papers, his furniture. He had no private talk with her; but he was glad just to meet her glance and hear her low replies—glad too to find that, as the evening wore on, she seemed less distraite and tired.

They went off early, Mr. Sandys pleading fatigue for Maud, and the necessity for himself of a good night's rest, that he might ride forth on the following day conquering and to conquer.

The next day they lunched with Jack. When Howard came into the room he was not surprised to find that two undergraduates had been asked—Jack's chief allies. One was a big, good-humoured young man, who was very shy and silent; the other was one Fred Guthrie, who was one of the nicest men in the College; he was a Winchester boy, son of a baronet, a Member of Parliament, wealthy and distinguished. Guthrie had a large allowance, belonged to all the best clubs, played cricket with

the chance of a blue ahead of him, and had, moreover, a real social gift. He had a quite unembarrassed manner and, what is rare in a young man, a strong sense of humour. He was a prominent member of the A.D.C., and had a really artistic gift of mimicry; but there was no touch of forwardness or conceit about him. He had been in for some examination or other; and when Howard came in he was describing his experiences. "What sort of questions?" he was saying. "Oh, you know the kind—an awful quotation, followed by the question, 'Who said this, and under what circumstances, and why did they let him?'" He made himself entirely at home, he talked to Mr. Sandys as if he were welcoming an old family friend, and he was evidently much attracted by Maud, who found it remarkably easy to talk to this pleasant and straightforward boy. He described with much liveliness an interview between Jack and the Master on the subject of reading the lessons in chapel, and imitated the suave tones of that courteous old gentleman to the life. "Far be it from me to deny it was dramatic, Mr. Sandys, but I should prefer a slightly more devotional tone." He related with great good-humour how a heavy, well-meaning, and rather censorious undergraduate had waited behind in his room on an evening when he had been entertaining the company with some imitations, and had said, "You are fond of imitating people, Guthrie,

and you do it a great deal; but you ought to say *who* it is you are imitating, because one can't be quite sure!"

Mr. Sandys was immensely amused by the young man, and had related some of his own experiences in elocution—how his clerk on the first occasion of reading the lesson at Windlow was reported to have said, "Why, you might think he had been *there*, in a manner of speaking."

Guthrie was not in the least concerned to keep the conversation in his own hands, and received Mr. Sandys' stories with exactly the right amount of respectful interest and amusement. But the result of all this upon Howard was to make him feel extraordinarily heavy and elderly. He felt that he and Mr. Sandys were the make-weights of the party, and he was conscious that his own contributions were wanting in liveliness.

Maud was extraordinarily amused by the bits of mimicry that came in, because it was so well done that it inspired everyone with the feeling that mimicry was the one art worth practising; and Mr. Sandys himself launched into dialect stories, in which Somersetshire rustics began by saying, "Hoots, mon!" and ended by saying, "The ould divil himsilf."

After luncheon it became clear that Jack had given up the afternoon as a bad job, and suggested that they should all go down to the river. The

rowing man excused himself, and Howard followed his example, pleading occupation of a vague kind. Mr. Sandys was enchanted at the prospect, and they went off in the charge of Guthrie, who was free, promising to return and have tea in his rooms. Guthrie, who was a friend of Howard's, included him in the invitation, but Howard said that he could not promise, but would look in if he could.

As a matter of fact, he went out for a lonely walk, ashamed of himself for his stupidity. He could not put himself in the position, he dismally thought, of competing for Maud's attention.

He walked off round by Madingley, hardly aware of what road he was taking. By the little chalk-pit just outside the village a rustic pair, a boy and girl, stood sheepishly clasped in a dull and silent embrace. Howard, to whom public exhibitions of emotion were distasteful, walked swiftly by with averted eyes, when suddenly a poignant thought came on him, causing him to redden up to the roots of his hair, and walk faster than ever. It was this, then, that was the matter with him—he was in love, he was jealous, he was the victim of the oldest, simplest, commonest, strongest emotion of humanity. His eyes were opened. How had he not seen it before ? His broodings over the thought of Maud, the strange disturbance that came on him in her presence, that absurd desire to do or say something

impressive, coupled with that wretched diffidence that kept him silent and helpless—it was love! He became half dizzy with the thought of what it all meant; and at the same instant, Maud seemed to recede from him as something impossibly pure, sweet, and unapproachable. All that notion of a paternal close friendship—how idiotic it was! He wanted her, at every moment, to share every thought with her, to claim every thought of hers, to see her, to clasp her close; and then at the same moment came the terrible disillusionment; how was he, a sober, elderly, stiff-minded professional person, to recommend himself? What was there in him that any girl could find even remotely attractive—his middle-aged habits, his decorous and conventional mind, his clumsy dress, his grizzled hair? He felt of himself that he was ravaged with age and decrepitude, and yet in his folly he had suggested this visit, and he had thrown the girl he loved out of her lonely life, craving for sympathy and interest, into a set of young men all apt for passion and emotion. The thought of Guthrie with his charm, his wealth, his aplomb, fell cold on his heart. Howard's swift imagination pictured the mutual attraction of the two, the enchanting discoveries, the laughing sympathy. Guthrie would, no doubt, come down to Windlow. It was exactly the kind of match that Mr. Sandys would like for Maud; and this was to be the end of this

tragic affair. How was he to endure the rest of the days of the visit? This was Tuesday, and they were not to go till Saturday; and he would have to watch the budding of a romance which would end in his choosing Maud a wedding-present, and attending at Windlow Church in the character of the middle-aged squire, beaming through his glasses on the young people.

In such abject reflections the walk passed away. He crept into College by the side-entrance, settled down to his evening work with grim tenacity, and lost himself in desperate imaginings of all the pleasant things that might be happening to the party. They were to dine at a restaurant, he believed, and probably Guthrie would be free to join them.

Late that night Jack looked in. "Is anything the matter?" he said. "Why didn't you come to Guthrie's? Look here, you are going to play fair, aren't you? I can't do all the entertaining business myself. I really must have a day off to-morrow, and get some exercise."

"All right," said Howard, "I'll take them on. Suppose you bring them to luncheon here. And I will tell you what I will do. I will be responsible for to-morrow afternoon. Then on Thursday you shall come and dine here again; and on Friday I will try to get the Master to lunch—that will smooth things over a bit."

"Thanks very much," said Jack; "that's splendid! I wish we hadn't let ourselves in for quite so much. I'm not fit to lead a double life like this. I'm sure I don't grudge them their outing, but, by George, I shall be glad to see the last of them, and I daresay you will be too. It's the hardest work I've had for a long time."

The two came and lunched with Howard. After luncheon he said, "Now, I am absolutely free to-day—Jack has got a lawn-tennis match on—what shall we do?"

"Well," said Mr. Sandys genially, "I will be entirely selfish for once. I have come on the track of some very important matters in the Library, and I see they are going to take up my time. And then I am going in to have a cup of tea at Pembroke with the Dean, an old friend of mine. There, I make no excuses! I did suggest to Herries that I had a daughter with me; but he rather pointedly didn't ask her. Women are not in his line, and he will like a quiet talk with me. Now, what do you say to that, Howard?"

"Well, if Miss Maud will put up with me," said Howard, "we will stroll about, and we might go to King's Chapel together. I should like to show her that, and we will go to see Monica Graves, and get some tea there."

"Give Monica my love," said Mr. Sandys, "and make what excuses you can. Better tell her the

truth for once! I will try to look in upon her before I go."

Maud assented very eagerly and gratefully. They walked together to the Library, and Mr. Sandys bolted in like a rabbit into its hole. Howard was alone with her.

She was very different, he thought, from what she had seemed that first night. She was alert, smiling, delighted with everything and everybody about the place. "I think it is all simply enchanting!" she said; "only it makes me long to go to Newnham. I think men do have a better time than women; and, what is more, no one here seems to have anything whatever to do!"

"That's only our unselfishness," said Howard. "We get no credit! Think of all the piles of papers that are accumulating on my table. The other day I entertained with all the virtue and self-sacrifice at my command a party of working-men from the East end of London at luncheon in my rooms, and took them round afterwards. They knew far more than I did about the place, and I cut a very poor figure. At the end the Secretary, meaning to be very kind to me, said that he was glad to have seen a glimpse of the cultured life. 'It is very beautiful and distinguished,' he added, 'but we of the democracy shall not allow it to continue. It is always said that the Dons have nothing to do but to read and sip their wine, and I am glad

to see it all for myself. To think of all these endowments being used like this! Not but what we are very grateful to you for your kindness!' "

They strolled about. Cambridge is not a place that puts its characteristic beauties in the forefront. Some of the most charming things lurk unsuspected beyond dark entries and behind sombre walls. They penetrated little mouldering courts; they looked into dim and stately halls and chapels; they stood long on the bridge of Clare, gazing at that incomparable front, with all the bowery gardens and willow-shaded walks, like Camelot, beside the slow, terraced stream.

It was a tortured kind of delight for Howard to feel the girl beside him; but she showed no wish to talk intimately or emotionally. She asked many questions, and he could see that she drank in eagerly the beauty of the place, understanding its charm in a moment. They went in to see Monica, who was in a mood of dry equanimity, and rallied Howard on the success of his visit to Windlow. "I hear you entered on the scene like a fairy prince," she said, "and charmed an estate out of Cousin Anne in the course of a few hours. Isn't he magnificent, Maud? You mustn't think he is a typical Don: he is quite one of our brightest flowers."

"When am I to come again to Windlow?" she added; "I suppose I must ask Howard's leave now? He told me, you know," she said to Maud, "that

he wanted a change—he was bored with his work; so I abandoned Aunt Anne to him; and he set up his flag in a moment. There are no diplomatists like these cultured and unworldly men, Maud! It was noble of me to do as I did. If I had exercised my persuasion on Aunt Anne, and kept Howard away, I believe she would have turned over Windlow to me, and I would have tried a social experiment there. It's just the place for an inebriate home; no public-houses, and plenty of fine spring water."

Maud was immensely amused by Monica. Howard contented himself by saying that he was much misinterpreted; and presently they went off to King's together.

Maud was not prepared for King's Chapel, and indeed the tame, rather clumsy exterior gives very little hint of the wonders within.

When they passed the swing-door, and saw the fine soaring lines leading to the exquisite intricacies of the roof, the whole air full of rich colour; the dark carved screen, with the gleaming golden trumpets of the angels on the organ, Howard could see her catch her breath, and grow pale for an instant at the crowded splendour of the place.

They sat in the nave; and when the thin bell died down, and the footsteps passed softly by, and the organ uttered its melodious voice as the white-robed procession moved slowly in, Howard could see that the girl was almost overcome by the scene.

She looked at him once with a strange smile, a smile which he could not interpret; and as the service slowly proceeded—to Howard little more than a draught of sweet sensation—he could see that Maud was praying earnestly, deeply, for some consecration of hope and strength which he could not divine or guess at.

As they came away, she hardly spoke—she seemed tired and almost rapt out of herself. She just said, "Ah, I am glad I came here with you. I shall never forget this as long as I live—it is quite beyond words."

He took her back to the lodgings where they were staying. She shook hands with him, smiled faintly, almost tearfully, and went in without a word. Howard went back in a very agitated frame of mind. He did not understand what was in the girl's mind at all. She was different, utterly different. Some new current of thought had passed through her mind. He fancied that the girl, after her secluded life, with so many richly perceptive faculties half starved, had awakened almost suddenly to a sense of the crowded energies and joys of life, that youth and delight had quickened in her; that she foresaw new relations, and guessed at wonderful secrets. But it troubled him to think that she had not seemed to wish to revive their former little intimacy; she had seemed half unconscious of his presence, and all alive with new pleasures and curiosities. The

marvellous veil of sex appeared to have fallen between them. He had made friends with her, as he would have made friends with some ingenuous boy; and now something wholly new, mysterious, and aloof had intervened.

The rest of the visit was uneventful enough. Maud was different—that was plain—not less delightful, indeed even more so, in her baffling freshness; but Howard felt removed from her, shut out from her mind, kept at arm's length, even superseded.

The luncheon with the Master as guest was a success. He was an old bachelor clergyman, white-haired, dainty, courteous, with the complexion of a child. He was very gracious to Mr. Sandys, who regarded him much as he might have regarded the ghost of Isaiah, as a spirit who visited the earth from some paradisiacal retreat, and brought with him a fragrance of heaven. The thought of a Doctor of Divinity, the Head of a College, full of academical learning, and yet perfectly courteous and accessible, filled Mr. Sandys' cup of romance to the brim. He seemed to be storing his memory with the Master's words. The Master was delighted with Maud, and treated her with a charming and indulgent gaiety, which Howard envied. He asked her opinion, he deferred to her, he made her come and sit next to him, he praised Jack and Howard, and at the end of the luncheon he filled Mr. Sandys

with an almost insupportable delight by saying that the next time he could visit Cambridge he hoped he would stay at the Lodge—" but not unless you will promise to bring Miss Sandys as well—Miss Sandys is indispensable." Howard felt indeed grateful to the gallant and civil old man, who had so clear an eye for what was tender and beautiful. Even Jack, when the Master departed, was forced to say that he did not know that the old man had so much blood in him !

That night Mr. Sandys finished up his princely progress by dining in Hall with the Fellows, and going to the Combination Room afterwards. He was not voluble, as Howard had expected. He was overcome with deference, and seized with a desire to bow in all directions at the smallest civility. He sat next to the Vice-Master, and Mr. Redmayne treated him to an exhibition of the driest fireworks on record. Mr. Sandys assented to everything, and the number of times that he exclaimed " True, true ! admirably said ! " exceeded belief. He said to Howard afterwards that the unmixed wine of intellect had proved a potent beverage. " One must drink it down," he said, " and trust to assimilating it later. It has been a glorious week for me, my dear Howard, thanks to you ! Quite rejuvenating indeed ! I carry away with me a precious treasure of thought—just a few notes of suggestive trains of inquiry have been scribbled down, to be

dealt with at leisure. But it is the atmosphere, the rarefied atmosphere of high thought, which has braced and invigorated me. It has entirely obliterated from my mind that odious escapade of Jack's —so judiciously handled! The kindness of these eminent men, these intellectual giants, is profoundly touching and inspiring. I must not indeed hope to trespass on it unduly. Your Master—what a model of self-effacing courtesy—your Vice-Master —what a fine, rugged, uncompromising nature; and the rest of your colleagues"—with a wave of his hand—"what an impression of reserved and restrained force it all gives one! It will often sustain me," said the good Vicar in a burst of confidence, "in my simple labours, to think of all this tide of unaffected intellectual life ebbing and flowing so tranquilly and so systematically in old *alma mater!* The way in which you have laid yourself out to entertain me is indeed gratifying. If there is a thing I reverence it is intellect, especially when it is framed in modesty and courtesy."

Howard went with him to his lodgings, and just went in to say good-bye to Maud. Jack had been dining with her, but he was gone. He and Guthrie were going to the station to give them a send-off. "A charming young fellow, Guthrie!" said Mr. Sandys. "He has been constantly with us, and it is very pleasant to find that Jack has such an excellent friend. His father is, I believe, a man of wealth

and influence ? You would hardly have guessed it ! That a young man of that sort should have given up so much time to entertaining a country parson and his daughter is really very gratifying—a sign of the growing humanity of the youth of England. I fear we should not have been so tolerant at dear old Pembroke. I like your young men, Howard. They are unduly careless, I think, about dress ; but in courtesy and kindness, irreproachable ! "

Howard only had a few words with Maud, of a very commonplace kind. She had enjoyed herself very much, and it was good of him to have given up so much time to them. She seemed to him reserved and preoccupied, and he could not do anything to restore the old sense of friendship. He was tired himself ; it had been a week of great strain. Far from getting any nearer to Maud, he felt that he had drifted away from her, and that some intangible partition kept them apart. The visit, he felt, had been a mistake from beginning to end.

XVII

SELF-SUPPRESSION

As soon as the term was over, Howard went down to Windlow. He was in a very unhappy frame of mind. He could not capitulate; but the more that he thought, the more that he tried to analyse his feelings, the more complex they became. It really seemed to him at times as if two perfectly distinct people were arguing within him. He was afraid of love; his aim had always been to simplify his life as far as possible, and to live in a serene and cheerful spirit, for the day and in the day. His work, his relations with colleagues and pupils, had all amused and interested him; he had cared for people, he had many friends; but it was all a cool, temperate, unimpassioned kind of caring. People had drifted in and out of his life; with his frank and easy manner, his excellent memory for the characteristics and the circumstances of others, it had been easy for him to pick up a relationship where he had laid it down; but it was all a very untroubled business, and no one had ever really entered into his life; he did not like dropping people, and took some trouble by means of letters to keep up communication with his old pupils;

but his friendships had never reached the point at which the loss of a friend would have been a severe blow. He felt that he was always given credit for more affection than he possessed, and this had made him careful not to fail in any duty of friendship. He was always ready to take trouble, to advise, to help his old pupils in their careers; but it had been done more from a sense of courtesy than from any deeper motive.

Now, however, it was very different; he felt himself wholly preoccupied by the thought of Maud; and he found himself looking into the secret of love, as a man might gaze from a hill-top into a chasm where the rocky ridges plunged into mist, doubting of his way, and mistrusting his own strength to pursue the journey. He did not know what the quality of his love was; he recognised an intense kind of passion, but when he looked beyond that, and imagined himself wedded to Maud, what was the emotion that would survive the accomplishment of his desires? Would he find himself longing for the old, comfortable, isolated life again? did he wish his life to be inextricably intertwined with the life of another? He was not sure. He had a dread of having to concede an absolute intimacy, he wished to give only as much as he chose; and then, too, he told himself that he was too old to marry so young a girl, and that she would be happier if she could find a more equal partner for her life. Yet even

so the thought of yielding her to another sickened him. He believed that she had been attracted by Guthrie, and that he had but to hold his hand and keep his distance, and the relation might broaden into marriage. He wondered if love could begin so, so easily and simply. He would like to have believed it could not, yet it was just so that love did begin! And then, too, he did not know what was the nature of Maud's feelings to himself. He thought that she had been attracted to him, but in a sisterly sort of way; that he had come across her when she was feeling cramped and dissatisfied, and that a friendship with him had seemed to offer her a chance of expansion and interest.

He often thought of telling the whole story to his aunt; but like many people who seem extraordinarily frank about their feelings and fancies, and speak easily even of their emotions, he found himself condemned to silence about any emotion or experience that had any serious or tragic quality. Most people would have thought him communicative, and even lacking in reticence. But he knew in himself that it was not so; he could speak of his intimate ideas very readily upon slight acquaintance, because they were not to him matters of deep feeling; but the moment that they really moved him, he felt absolutely dumb and tongue-tied.

He established himself at Windlow, and became at once aware that his aunt perceived that there

was something amiss. She gave him opportunities of speaking to her, but he could not take them. He shrank with a painful dumbness from displaying his secret wound. It seemed to him undignified and humiliating to confess his weakness. He hoped vaguely that the situation would solve itself, and spare him the necessity of a confession.

He tried to occupy himself in his book, but in vain. Now that he was confronted with a real and urgent dilemma, the origins of religion seemed to him to have no meaning or interest. He did not feel that they had any bearing whatever upon life; and his pain seemed to infect all his perceptions. The quality of beauty in common things, the hill-shapes, the colour of field and wood, the lights of dawn and eve, the sailing cloud, the tints of weathered stone, the old house in its embowered garden, with the pure green lines of the down above, had no charm or significance for him any more. Again and again he said to himself, "How beautiful that would be, if I could but feel it to be so!" He saw, as clearly and critically as ever, the pleasant forms and hues and groupings of things, but it was dull and savourless, while all the attractive ideas that sprang up like flowers in his mind, the happy trains of thought, in which some single fancy ramified and extended itself into unsuspected combinations and connections, these all seemed hardly worth recognising or pursuing. He found himself listless and distracted,

just able by an effort to talk, to listen, to exchange thoughts, but utterly without any zest or energy.

Jack had gone off for a short visit, and Howard was thus left mostly alone. He went once or twice to the Vicarage, but found Mr. Sandys an unmixed trial; there seemed something wholly puerile about his absurd energies and activities. The only boon of his society was that he expected no reply to his soliloquies. Maud was there too, a distant graceful figure; but she, too, seemed to have withdrawn into her own thoughts, and their talk was mostly formal. Yet he was painfully and acutely conscious of her presence. She, too, seemed to be clouded and sad. He found himself unable to talk to her unconstrainedly. He could only dumbly watch her; she appeared to avert her eyes from him; and yet he drew from these meetings an infinite series of pictures, which were as if engraved upon his brain. She became for him in these days like a lily drooping in a shadowed place and in a thunderous air; something fading away mutely and sorrowfully, like the old figure of Mariana in the Grange, looking wearily through listless hours for something which had once beckoned to her with a radiant gesture, but which did not return. There were brighter hours, when in the hot July days a little peace fell on him, a little sense of the fragrance and beauty of the world. He took to long and solitary walks on the down in search of bodily fatigue. There was one day in

particular which he long remembered, when he had gone up to the camp, and sate in the shade of the thicket on the crisp turf, looking out over the valley, unutterably quiet and peaceful in the hot air. The trees were breathlessly still; the hamlet roofs peeped out above the orchards, the hot air quivered on the down. There were little figures far below moving about the fields. It all looked lost in a sweetness of serene repose; and the thoughts that had troubled him rose with a bitter poignancy, that was almost a physical pain. The contrast between the high summer, the rich life of herb and tree, and his own weary and arid thoughts, fell on him like a flash. Would it not be better to die, to close one's eyes upon it all, to sink into silence, than thus to register the awful conflict of will and passion with the tranquil life that could not surrender its dreams of peace? What did he need and desire? He could not tell; he felt almost a hatred of the slender, quiet girl, with her sweet look, her delicate hands, her noiseless movements. She had made no claim, she did not come in radiant triumph, with impressive gestures and strong commanding influences into his life; she had not even cried out passionately, demanded love, displayed an urgent need; there had been nothing either tragic or imperious, nothing that called for instant solution; she was just a girl, sweet, wayward, anxious-minded, living

a trivial, simple, sheltered life. What had given her this awful power over him, which seemed to have rent and shattered all his tranquil contentment, and yet had offered no splendid opportunity, claimed no all-absorbing devotion, no magnificent sacrifice? It was a sort of monstrous spell, a magical enchantment, which had thus made havoc of all his plans and gentle schemes. Life, he felt, could never be the same for him again; he was in the grip of a power that made light of human arrangements. The old books were full of it; they had spoken of some hectic mystery, that seized upon warriors and sages alike, wasted their strength, broke their energies, led them into crime and sorrow. He had always rather despised the pale and hollow-eyed lovers of the old songs, and thought of them as he might think of men indulging in a baneful drug which filched away all manful prowess and vigour. It was like *La Belle Dame sans merci* after all, the slender faring child, whose kiss in the dim grotto had left the warrior 'alone and palely loitering,' burdened with sad thoughts in the wintry land. And yet he could not withstand it. He could see the reasonable and sensible course, a placid friendship, a long life full of small duties and quiet labours;—and then the thought of Maud would come across him, with her shining hair, her clear eyes, holding a book, as he had seen her last in the Vicarage, in her delicate hands, and looking

out into the garden with that troubled inscrutable look; and all the prudent considerations fell and tumbled together like a house of cards, and he felt as though he must go straight to her and fall before her, and ask her to give him a gift the very nature of which he did not know, her girlish self, her lightly-ranging mind, her tiny cares and anxieties, her virginal heart—for what purpose? he did not know; just to be with her, to clasp her close, to hear her voice, to look into her eyes, to discourse with her some hidden secret of love. A faint sense of some infinite beauty and nearness came over him which, if he could win it, would put the whole of life into a different plane. Not a friendly combination, but an absolute openness and nakedness of soul, nothing hidden, nothing kept back, everything confessed and admitted, a passing of two streams of life into one.

XVIII

THE PICNIC

Jack arrived at Windlow in due course, and brought with him Guthrie to stay. Howard thought, and was ashamed of thinking, that Jack had some scheme on foot; and the arrival of Guthrie was embarrassing to him, as likely to complicate an already too complicated situation.

A plan was made for a luncheon picnic on the hill. There was a tower on the highest eminence of the down, some five miles away, a folly built by some wealthy squire among woodlands, and commanding wide views; it was possible to drive to a village at the foot, and to put up vehicles at a country inn; and it was proposed that they should take luncheon up to the tower, and eat it there. The Sandys party were to drive there, and Howard was to drive over with Miss Merry and meet them. Howard did not at all relish the prospect. He had a torturing desire for the presence of Maud, and yet he seemed unable to establish any communication with her; and he felt that the liveliness of the young men would reduce him to a condition of amiable ineffectiveness which would make him, as Marie Bashkirtseff naïvely said, hardly worth seeing.

However, there was no way out, and on a delicious July morning, with soft sunlight everywhere, and great white clouds floating in a sky of turquoise blue, Howard and Miss Merry started from Windlow. The little lady was full of decorous glee, and her mirth, like a working cauldron, threw all her high-minded tastes to the surface. She asked Howard's opinion about quite a number of literary masterpieces, and she ingenuously gave utterance to her meek and joyful views of life, the privileges she enjoyed, and the inspiration which she derived from the ethical views of Robert Browning. Howard found himself wondering why it was all so dreadfully uninteresting and devoid of charm; he asked himself whether, if the little spinster had been personally more attractive, her optimistic chirpings would have seemed to have more significance. Miss Merry had a perfectly definite view of life, and she made life into a distinct success; she was a happy woman, sustained by an abundance of meek enthusiasm. She accepted everything that happened to her, whether good or evil, with the same eager interest. Suffering, according to Miss Merry, had an educative quality, and life was haunted for her by echoes of excellent literature, accurately remembered. But Howard had a feeling that one must not swallow life quite so uncritically, that there ought somehow to be more discrimination; and Miss Merry's eager adoration of every-

thing and everybody reduced him to a flatness which he found it difficult to conceal. He could not think what was the matter with her views. She revelled in what she called problems, and the more incomplete that anything appeared, the more certain was Miss Merry of ultimate perfection. There did not seem any room for humanity, with its varying moods, in her outlook; and yet Howard had the grace to be ashamed of his own sullen dreariness, which certainly did not appear to lend any dignity to life. But he had not the heart to spoil the little lady's pleasure, and engaged in small talk upon moderately abstract topics with courteous industry. "Of course," said his companion confidingly, "all that I do is on a very small scale, but I think that the quality of it is what matters—the quality of one's ideal, I mean." Howard murmuringly assented. "I have sometimes even wished," she went on, "that I had some real trouble of my own—that seems foolish to you, no doubt, because my life is such an easy one—but I do feel that my happiness rather cuts me off from other people—and I don't want to be cut off from other people; I desire to know how and why they suffer."

"Ah," said Howard, "while you feel that, it is all right; but the worst of real suffering is, I believe, that it is apt to be entirely dreary—it is not at all romantic, as it seems from the outside; indeed it is the loss of all that sense of excitement which

makes suffering what it is. But really I have no right to speak either, for I have had a very happy life too."

Miss Merry heard him moist-eyed and intent. "Yes, I am sure that is true!" she said. "I suppose we all have just as much as we can use—just as much as it is good for us to have."

They found that the others had arrived, and were unpacking the luncheon. Maud greeted Howard with a shy expectancy; but the sight of her, slender and fresh in her rough walking-dress, renewed his strange pangs. What did he want of her, he asked himself; what was this mysterious and unmanning sense, that made him conscious of every movement and every word of the girl? Why could he not meet her in a cheerful, friendly, simple way, and make the most of her enchanting company?

Mr. Sandys was in great spirits, revelling in arrangements and directions. But the wind was taken out of his sails by the two young men, who were engaged in enacting a bewildering kind of drama, a saga, of which the venerable Mr. Redmayne appeared to be the hero. Guthrie, who was in almost overpowering spirits, took the part of Mr. Redmayne, whom he imitated with amazing fidelity. He had become, it seemed, a man of low and degrading tastes—'Erb Redmayne, he was called, or old 'Erb, whose rôle was to lead the other

authorities of the college into all kinds of disreputable haunts, to prompt them to absurd misdeeds, to take advantage of their ingenuousness, to make scapegoats of them, and to adroitly evade justice himself.

On this occasion 'Erb Redmayne seemed to have inveigled the Master, whose part was taken by Jack, to a race-meeting, to be introducing him to the most unsatisfactory company, to force him to put money on certain horses, to evade the payment of debts incurred, to be detected in the act of absconding, and to leave the unfortunate Master to bear the brunt of public indignation. Guthrie seemed at first a little shy of enacting this drama before Howard, but Jack said reassuringly, "Oh, he won't give us away—it will amuse him!" This extravaganza continued with immense gusto and emphasis all the way to luncheon, 'Erb Redmayne treating the Master with undisguised contempt, and the Master performing meekly his bidding. Mr. Sandys was in fits of laughter. "Excellent, excellent!" he cried among his paroxysms. "You irreverent young rascals—but it was just the sort of thing we used to do, I am afraid!"

There was no doubt that it was amusing; in another mood Howard would have been enchanted by the performance, and even flattered at being allowed to overhear it. Mr. Redmayne was admirably rendered, and Jack's performance of the

anxious and courteous Master, treading the primrose path reluctantly and yet subserviently, was very nearly as good. But Howard simply could not be amused, and it made it almost worse for him to see that Maud was delighted, while even Miss Merry was obviously though timidly enjoying the enlargement of her experience, and exulting in her freedom from any priggish disapproval.

They made their way to the top and found the tower, a shell of masonry, which could be ascended by a winding staircase in a turret. The view, from the platform at the summit, was certainly enchanting. The tower stood in an open heathery space, with woods enclosing it on every side; from the parapet they looked down over the steeply falling tree-tops to an immense plain, where a river widened to the sea. Howard, side by side with Maud, gazed in silence. Mr. Sandys identified landmarks with a map. "How nice it is to see a bit of the world!" said Maud, "and how happy and contented it all looks. It seems odd to think of men and women down there, creeping about their work, going to and fro as usual, and not aware that they are being looked down upon like this. It all seems a very simple business."

"Yes," said Howard, "that is the strange thing. It does seem so simple and tranquil! and yet one knows that down there people have their troubles and anxieties—people are ill, are dying—are wonder-

ing what it all means, why they are set just there, and why they have so short a time to stay ! "

" I suppose it all fits into itself," said Maud, " somehow or other. I don't think that life really contradicts itself ! "

" I don't know," said Howard, with a sudden access of dreariness ; " that is exactly what it *does* seem to do—that's the misery of it ! "

The girl looked at him but did not speak ; he gave her an uneasy smile, and she presently turned away and looked over her father's map.

They went down and lunched on a green bank among the fern, under some old oaks. The sunlight fell among the glades ; a flock of tits, chirruping and hunting, rushed past them and plunged downward into the wood. They could hear a dove in the high trees near them, crooning a song of peace and infinite content. Mr. Sandys, stung by emulation, related a long story, interspersed with imitations, of his undergraduate days ; and Howard was content to sit and seem to listen, and to watch the light pierce downwards into the silent woodland. An old woodman, grey and bent and walking painfully, in great leather gloves and gaiters, carrying a chopper, passed slowly along the ride and touched his hat. Jack insisted on giving him some of the luncheon, and made up a package for him which the old man put away in a pocket, and made some remarks about the weather, adding with a senile

pride that he was over seventy, and had worked in the woodland for sixty years and more. He was an almost mediæval figure, Howard thought—a woodman five centuries ago would have looked and spoken much the same ; he knew nothing of the world, or the thoughts and hopes of it ; he was almost as much of the soil as the very woods themselves, in his dim mechanical life ; was man made for that after all ? How did that square with Miss Merry's eager optimism ? What was the meaning of so unconscious a figure, so obviously without an ethical programme, and yet so curiously devised by God, patiently nurtured and preserved ?

In the infinite peace, while the flies hummed on the shining bracken, and the breeze nestled in the firs like a falling sea, Howard had a spasm of incredulous misery. Could any heart be so heavy, so unquiet as his own ?—life suddenly struck so aimless, with but one overmastering desire, which he could not fulfil. He was shocked at his feebleness. A year ago he could have devised no sweeter or more delicious day than this, with such a party, in the high sunlit wood. . . .

The imitations began again.

" I don't believe there's anyone you could not imitate ! " said Mr. Sandys rapturously.

" Oh, it's only a knack," said Guthrie, " but some people are easier than others."

Howard bestirred himself to express some interest

"Why, he can imitate *you* to the life," said Jack.

"Oh, come, nonsense!" said Guthrie, reddening; "that is really low, Jack."

"I confess to a great curiosity about it," said Mr. Sandys.

"Oh, don't mind me," said Howard; "it would amuse me above everything—like catching a glance at oneself in an unexpected mirror!"

Guthrie, after a little more pressing, yielded. He said a few sentences, supposed to be Howard teaching, in a rather soft voice, with what seemed to Howard a horribly affected and priggish emphasis. But the matter displeased him still more. It was facetious, almost jocose; and there was a jerky attempt at academic humour in it, which seemed to him particularly nauseous, as of a well-informed and quite superior person condescending to the mildest of witticisms, to put himself on a level with juvenile minds. Howard had thought himself both unaffected and elastic in his communications with undergraduates, and this was the effect he produced upon them! However, he mastered his irritation; the others laughed a little tentatively; it was felt for a moment that the affair had just passed the limits of conventional civility. Howard contrived to utter a species of laugh, and said, "Well, that's quite a revelation to me. It never occurred to me that there could

be anything to imitate in my utterance; but then it is always impossible to believe that anyone can find anything to discuss in one behind one's back—though I suppose no one can escape. I must get a stock of new witticisms, I think; the typical ones seem a little threadbare."

"Oh no, indeed," said Miss Merry, gallantly; "I was just thinking how much I should like to be taught like that!"

The little incident seemed rather to damp the spirits of the party. Guthrie himself seemed deeply annoyed at having consented: and it was a relief to all when Mr. Sandys suddenly pulled out his watch and said, "Well, all pleasant things come to an end—though to be sure there is generally another pleasant thing waiting round the corner. I have to get back, but I am not going to spoil the party. I shall enjoy a bit of a walk."

"Well," said Howard, "I think I will set you on your way. I want a talk about one or two things; but I will come back to chaperon Miss Merry—I suppose I shall find you somewhere about?"

"Yes," said Miss Merry, "I am going to try a sketch—but I must not have anyone looking over my shoulder. I am no good at sketching—but I like to be made to look close at a pretty thing. I am going to try the chalk-pit and thicket near the tower—chalk-pits suit my style, because one can leave so much of the paper white!"

"Very well," said Howard, "I will be back here in an hour."

Howard and Mr. Sandys started off through the wood. Mr. Sandys was full of communications. He began to talk about Guthrie. "Such a good friend for Jack!" he said; "I hope he bears a good character in the college? Jack seems to be very much taken up with him, and says there is no nonsense about him—almost the highest commendation he has in his power to bestow—indeed I have heard him use the same phrase about yourself! Young Guthrie seems such a natural and unaffected fellow—indeed, if I may say so, Howard, it seemed to me a high compliment to yourself, and to speak volumes for your easy relation with young men, that he should have ventured to take you off to your face just now, and that you should have been so sincerely amused. It isn't as if he were a cheeky sort of boy—if I may be allowed such an expression. He treats me with the pleasantest deference and respect—and when I think of his father's wealth and political influence, that seems to me a charming trait! There is nothing uppish about him."

"No, indeed," said Howard; "he is a thoroughly nice fellow!"

"I am delighted to hear you say so," said Mr. Sandys, "and your kindness emboldens me to say something which is quite confidential; but then we are practically relations, are we not? Perhaps

it is only a father's partiality; but have you noticed, may I say, anything in his manner to my dear Maud? It may be only a passing fancy, of course. 'In the spring,' you remember, 'a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love'—a beautiful line that, though of course it is not strictly applicable to the end of July. I need hardly say that such a connection would gladden my heart. I am all for marriage, Howard, for early marriage, the simplest and best of human experiences; of course it has more sides than one to it. I should not like it to be supposed that a country parson like myself had in the smallest degree inveigled a young man of the highest prospects into a match—there is nothing of the matchmaker about me; but Maud is in a degree well-connected; and, as you know, she will be what the country people here call 'well-left'—a terse phrase, but expressive! I do not see that she would be in any way unworthy of the position—and I feel that her life here is a little secluded—I should like her to have a little richer material, so to speak, to work in. Well, well, we mustn't be too diplomatic about these things. 'Man proposes'—no humorous suggestion intended—'and God disposes'—but if it should so turn out, without any scheming or management—things which I cordially detest—if it should open out naturally, why, I should be lacking in candour if I pretended it would not please me. I believe in

early engagements, and romance, and all that—I fear I am terribly sentimental—and it is just the thing to keep a young man straight. Sir Henry Guthrie might be disposed to view it in that light—what do you think ? "

This ingenuous statement had a very distressing effect on Howard. It is one thing to dally with a thought, however seriously, in one's own mind, and to have it presented in black and white through the frank conjecture of another. He put a severe constraint upon himself and said, " Do you know, Frank, the same thought had occurred to me—I had believed that I saw something of the kind ; and I can honestly say that I think Guthrie a very sound fellow indeed in every way—quite apart from his worldly prospects. He is straight, sensible, good-humoured, capable, and, I think, a really unselfish fellow. If I had a daughter of my own I could not imagine a better husband."

" You delight me inexpressibly," said Mr. Sandys. " So you had noticed it ? Well, well, I trust your perception far more than my own ; and of course I am biassed—you might almost incline to say dazzled—by the prospect : heir to a baronetcy (I could wish it had been of an earlier creation), rich, and, as you say, entirely reliable and straight. Of course I don't in any way wish to force matters on. I could not bear to be thought to have unduly encouraged such an alliance—and Maud may marry

any nice fellow she has a fancy to marry; but I think that she is rather drawn to young Guthrie—what do you think? He amuses her, and she is at her best with him—don't you think so?"

"Yes," said Howard, "I had thought so. I think she likes him very much."

"Well, we will leave it at that," said Mr. Sandys in high gusto. "You don't mind my confiding in you thus, Howard? Somehow, if I may say it, I find it very easy to speak confidentially to you. You are so perceptive, so sympathetic! We all feel that it is the secret of your great influence."

They talked of other matters after this as they walked along the crest of the downs; and where the white road began to descend into the valley, with the roofs of Windlow glimmering in the trees a little to the north, Howard left the Vicar and retraced his steps.

He was acutely miserable; the thing had come upon him with a shock, and brought the truth home to him in a desperate way. But he experienced at the same time a certain sensation, for a moment, of grim relief. His fancy, his hope—how absurd and idiotic they had been!—were shattered. How could he ever have dreamed that the girl should come to care for him in that way—an elderly Don of settled habits, who had even mistaken a pompous condescension to the young men of his College for a natural and sympathetic relation—that was what

he was. The melancholy truth stared him in the face. He was sharply disillusioned. He had lingered on, clinging pathetically to youth, and with a serene complacency he had overlooked the flight of time. He was a dull, middle-aged man, fond of sentimental relations and trivial confidences, who had done nothing, effected nothing; had even egregiously failed in the one thing he had set himself to do, the retaining his hold on youth. Well, he must face it! He must be content to settle down as a small squire; he must disentangle himself from his Cambridge work gradually—it sickened him to think of it—and he must try to lead a quiet life, and perhaps put together a stupid book or two. That was to be his programme. He must just try to be grateful for a clear line of action. If he had had nothing but Cambridge to depend upon, it would have been still worse. Now he must settle down to county business if he could, and clear his mind of all foolish regrets. Love and marriage—he was ten years too late! He had dawdled on, taking the line of least resistance, and he was now revealed to himself in a true and unsparing light. He paced swiftly on, and presently entered the wood. His feet fell soft on the grassy road among the coverts.

Suddenly, as he turned a corner, he saw a little open glade to the right. A short way up the glade stood two figures—Guthrie and Maud—engaged

in conversation. They were standing facing each other. She seemed to be expostulating with him in a laughing way; he stood bareheaded, holding his hat in his hand, eagerly defending himself. The pose of the two seemed to show an easy sort of comradeship. Maud was holding a stick in both hands behind her, and half resting upon it. They seemed entirely absorbed in what they were saying. Howard could not bear to intrude upon the scene. He fell back among the trees, retraced his steps, and then sat down on a grassy bank, a little off the path, and waited. It was the last confirmation of his fears. It was not quite a lover-like scene, but they evidently understood each other, and were wholly at their ease together, while Guthrie's admiring and passionate look did not escape him. He rested his head in his hands, and bore the truth as he might have borne a physical pain. The summer woods, the green thickets, the sunlight on the turf, the white clouds, the rich plain just visible through the falling tree-trunks, all seemed to him like a vision seen by a spirit in torment, something horribly unreal and torturing. The two streams of beauty and misery appeared to run side by side, so distinct, so unblending; but the horrible fact was that though sorrow was able not only to assert its own fiery power, like the sting of some malignant insect, it could also obliterate and efface joy; it could even press joy into its service, to accentuate

its torment; while the joy and beauty of life seemed wholly unable to soothe or help him, but were brushed aside, just as a stern soldier, armed and mailed, could brush aside the onslaught of some delicate and frenzied boy. Was pain the stronger power, was it the ultimate power? In that dark moment, Howard felt that it was. Joy seemed to him like a little pool of crystalline water, charming enough if tended and sheltered, but a thing that could be soiled and scattered in a moment by the onrush of some foul and violent beast.

He came at last to the rendezvous. Miss Merry sat at her post transferring to a little block of paper a smeared and streaky picture of the chalk-pit, which seemed equally unintelligible at whatever angle it might be held. Jack was couched at a little distance in the heather, smoking a pipe. Howard went and sat down moodily beside him. "An odd thing, a picnic," said Jack musingly; "I am not sure it is not an invention of the devil. Is anything the matter, Howard? You look as if things had gone wrong. You don't mind that nonsense of Guthrie's, do you? I was an ass to get him to do it; I hate doing a stupid thing, and he is simply wild with me. It's no good saying it is not like, because it is in a way, but of course it's only a rag. It isn't absurd when you do it, only when someone else does."

"Oh no, I don't mind about that," said Howard;

" do make that plain to Guthrie. I am out of sorts, I think; one gets bothered, you know—what is called the blues."

" Oh, I know," said Jack sympathetically; " I don't suffer from them myself as a rule, but I have got a touch of them to-day. I can't understand what everyone is up to. Fred Guthrie has got the jumps. It looks to me," he went on sagely, " as if he was what is commonly called in love: but when the other person is one's sister, it seems strange. Maud isn't a bad girl, as they go, but she isn't an angel, and still less a saint; but Fred has no eyes for anyone else; I can't screw a sensible word out of him. These young people!" said Jack with a sour grimace; " you and I know better. One ought to leave the women alone; there's something queer about them; you never know where you are with them."

Howard regarded him in silence for a moment: it did not seem worth while to argue; nothing seemed worth while. " Where are they?" he said drearily.

" Oh, goodness knows!" said Jack; " when I last saw them he was beating down the ferns with a stick for Maud to go through. He's absolutely demented, and she is at one of her games. I think I shall sheer off, and go to visit some sick people, like the governor; that's about all I feel up to."

At this moment, however, the truants appeared, walking silently out of a glade. Howard had an obscure feeling that something serious had happened—he did not know what. Guthrie looked dejected, and Maud was evidently preoccupied. "Oh, damn the whole show!" said Jack, getting up. "Let's get out of this!"

"We lost our way," said Maud, rather hurriedly, "and couldn't find our way back."

Maud went up to Miss Merry, asked to see her sketch, and indulged in some very intemperate praise. Guthrie came up to Howard, and stammered through an apology for his rudeness.

"Oh, don't say anything more," said Howard. "Of course I didn't mind! It really doesn't matter at all."

The day was beginning to decline; and in an awkward silence, only broken by inconsequent remarks, the party descended the hill, regained the carriages, and drove off in mournful silence. As the Vicarage party drove away, Jack glanced at Howard, raised his eyes in mock despair, and gave a solemn shake of his head.

Howard followed with Miss Merry, and talked wildly about the future of English poetry, till they drove in under the archway of the Manor and his penance was at an end.

XIX

DESPONDENCY

Howard spent some very unhappy days after that, mostly alone. They were very active at the Vicarage making expeditions, fishing, playing lawn-tennis, and once or twice pressed him to join them. But he excused himself on the ground that he must work at his book; he could not bear to carry his despondency and his dolorous air into so blithe a company; and he was, moreover, consumed by a jealousy which humiliated him. If Guthrie was destined to win Maud's love he should have a fair field; and yet Howard's imagination played him many fevered tricks in those days, and the thought of what might be happening used to sting him into desperation. His own mood alternated between misery and languor. He used to sit staring at his book, unable to write a word, and became gradually aware that he had never been unhappy in his life before. That, then, was what unhappiness meant, not a mood of refined and romantic melancholy, but a raging fire of depression that seemed to burn his life away, both physically and mentally, with intervals of drowsy listlessness.

He would have liked to talk to his aunt, but could

not bring himself to do so. She, on the other hand, seemed to notice nothing, and it was a great relief to him that she never commented upon his melancholy and obvious fatigue, but went on in her accustomed serene way, which evoked his courtesy and sense of decorum, and made him behave decently in spite of himself. Miss Merry seemed much more inclined to sympathise, and Howard used to intercept her gaze bent upon him in deep concern.

One afternoon, returning from a lonely walk, he met Maud going out of the Manor gate. She looked happy, he thought. He stopped and made a few commonplace remarks. She looked at him rather strangely, he felt, and seemed to be searching his face for some sign of the old goodwill; but he hardened his heart, though he would have given worlds to tell her what was in his mind; but he felt that any reconstruction of friendship must be left till a later date, when he might again be able to conciliate her sisterly regard. She seemed to him to have passed through an awakening of some kind, and to have bloomed both in mind and body, with her feet on the threshold of vital experience, and the thought that it was Guthrie who could evoke this upspringing of life within her was very bitter to him.

He trod the valley of humiliation hour by hour, in these lonely days, and found it a very dreary

place. It was wretched to him to feel that he had suddenly discovered his limitations. Not only could he not have his will, could not taste the fruit of love which had seemed to hang almost within his reach, but the old contented life seemed to have faded and collapsed about him.

That night his aunt asked him about his book, and he said he was not getting on well with it. She asked why, and he said that he had been feeling that it was altogether too intellectual a conception ; that he had approached it from the side of *reason*, as if people argued themselves into faith, and had treated religion as a thesis which could be successfully defended ; whereas the vital part of it all, he now thought, was an instinct, perhaps refined by inherited thought, but in its practical manifestations a kind of choice, determined by a natural liking for what was attractive, and a dislike of what was morally ugly.

" Yes," said Mrs. Graves, " that is true, I am sure. But it can be analysed for all that, though I agree with you that no amount of analysis will make one act rightly. But I believe," she went on, " that clearness of view helps one, though not perhaps at the time. It is a great thing to see what motives are merely conventional and convenient, and to find out what one really regards as principles. To look a conventional motive in the face deprives it of its power ; and one can gradually disencumber

oneself of all sorts of complicated impulses, which have their roots in no emotion. It is only the motives which are rooted in emotion that are vital."

Then, after a pause, she said, "Of course I have seen of late that you have been dissatisfied with something. I have not liked to ask you about it; but if it would help you to talk about it, I hope you will. It is wonderful how talking about things makes one's mind clear. It isn't anything that others say or advise that helps one, yet one gains in clearness. But you must do as you like about this, Howard. I don't want to press you in any way."

"Thank you very much," said Howard. "I know that you would hear me with patience, and might perhaps advise me if anyone could; but it isn't that. I have got myself into a strange difficulty; and what I need is not clearness, but simply courage to face what I know and perceive. My great lack hitherto is that I have gone through things without feeling them, like a swallow dipping in a lake; now I have got to sink and drown. No," he added, smiling, "not to drown, I hope, but to find a new life in the ruins of the old. I have been on the wrong tack; I have always had what I liked, and done what I liked; and now when I am confronted with things which I do not like at all, I have just got to endure them, and be glad that I have still got the power of suffering left."

Mrs. Graves looked at him very tenderly. "Yes,"

she said, "suffering has a great power, and one doesn't want those whom one loves not to suffer. It is the condition of loving; but it must be real suffering, not morbid, self-invented torture. It's a great mistake to suffer more than one need; one wastes life fast so. I would not intervene to save you from real suffering, even if I could; but I don't want you to suffer in an unreal way. I think you are diffident, too easily discouraged, too courteous, if that is possible—because diffidence, and discouragement, and even courtesy, are not always unselfish things. If one renounces anything one has set one's heart upon one must do so for its own sake, and not only because the disapproval and disappointment of others makes life uncomfortable. I think that your life has tended to make you value an atmosphere of diffused tranquillity too much. If one is sensitive to the censure or the displeasure of others, it may not be unselfish to give up things rather than provoke it—it may only be another form of selfishness. Some of the most unworldly people I know have not overcome the world at all; they have merely made terms with it, and have found that abnegation is only more comfortable than conquest. I do not know that you are doing this, or have done it, but I think it likely. And in any case I think you trust reason too much, and instinct too little. If one desires a thing very much, it is often a proof that one needs it. One

may not indeed be able to get it, but to resign it is sometimes to fail in courage. I can see that you are in some way discontented with your life. Don't try to mend it by a polite withdrawal. I am going to pay you a compliment. You have a wonderful charm, of which you are unconscious. It has made life very easy for you—but it has responsibilities too. You must not create a situation, and then abandon it. You must not disappoint people. I know, of course, only too well, that charm in itself largely depends on a tranquil mind; and it is difficult to exercise it when one is sad and unhappy; but let me say that unhappiness does not deprive *you* of this power. Does it seem impossible to you to believe that I have loved you far better, and in a way which I could not have thought possible, in these last weeks, when I have seen you were unhappy? You do not abandon yourself to depression; you make an effort; you recognise other people's rights to be happy, not to be clouded by your own unhappiness; and you have done more to attach us all to you in these days than before, when you were perhaps more conscious of being liked. Liking is not loving, Howard. There is no pain about liking; there is infinite pain about loving; that is because it is life, and not mere existence."

"Ah," said Howard, "I am indeed grateful to you for speaking to me thus—you have lifted my

spirit a little out of the mire. But I can't be rescued so easily. I shall have a burden to bear for some time yet—I see no end to it at present: and it is indeed my own foolish trifling with life that has brought it on me. But, dearest aunt, you can't help me just now. Let me be silent a little longer. I shall soon, I think, be able to speak, and then I will tell you all; and meanwhile it will be a comfort to me to think that you feel for me and about me as you do. I don't want to indulge in self-pity—I have not done that. There is nothing unjust in what has happened to me, nothing intolerable, no specific ill-will. I have just stumbled upon one of the big troubles of life, suddenly and unexpectedly, and I am not prepared for it by any practice or discipline. But I shall get through, don't be afraid—and presently I will tell you everything." He took his aunt's hand in his own, and kissed her on the cheek.

"God bless you, dear boy!" she said; "I won't press you to speak; and you will know that I have you in mind now and always, with infinite hope and love."

XX

HIGHMINDEDNESS

Howard on thinking over this conversation was somewhat bewildered as to what exactly was in his aunt's mind. He did not think that she understood his feeling for Maud, and he was sure that she did not realise what Maud's feelings about Freddy Guthrie were. He came to the conclusion eventually that Maud had told her about the beginnings of their friendship ; that his aunt supposed that he had tried to win Maud's confidence, as he would have made friends with one of his young men ; and that she imagined that he had found that Maud's feeling for him had developed in rather too confidential a line, as for a father-confessor. He thought that Mrs. Graves had seen that Maud had been disposed to adopt him as a kind of ethical director, and had thought that he had been bored at finding a girl's friendship so much more exacting than the friendship of a young man ; and that she had been exhorting him to be more brotherly and simple in his relations with Maud, and to help her to the best of his ability. He imagined that Maud had told Mrs. Graves that he had been advising her, and that she had perhaps since told her of his

chilly reception of her later confidences. That was the situation he had created ; and he felt with what utter clumsiness he had handled it. His aunt, no doubt, thought that he had been disturbed at finding how much more emotional a girl's dependence upon an older man was than he had expected. But he felt that when he could tell her the whole story, she would see that he could not have acted otherwise. He had been so thrown off his balance by finding how deeply he cared for Maud, that he had been simply unable to respond to her advances. He ought to have had more control of himself. Mrs. Graves had not suspected that he could have grown to care for a girl, almost young enough to be his daughter, in so passionate a way. He wished he could have explained the whole to her, but he was too deeply wounded in mind to confess to his aunt how impulsive he had been. He had now no doubt that there was an understanding between Maud and Guthrie. Everyone else seemed to think so ; and when once the affair was happily launched, he would enjoy a mournful triumph, he thought, by explaining to Mrs. Graves how considerately he had behaved, and how painful a dilemma Maud would have been placed in if he had declared his passion. Maud would have blamed herself ; she might easily, with her anxious sense of responsibility, have persuaded herself into accepting him as a lover ; and then a life-long penance might have begun for her.

He had, at what a cost, saved Maud from the chance of such a mistake. It was a sad tangle; but when Maud was happily married, he would perhaps be able to explain to her why he had behaved as he had done; and she would be grateful to him then. His restless and fevered imagination traced emotional and dramatic scenes, in which his delicacy would at last be revealed. He felt ashamed of himself for this abandonment to sentiment, but he seemed to have lost control over the emotional part of his mind, which continued to luxuriate in the consciousness of his own self-effacement. He had indeed, he felt, fallen low. But he continued to trace in his mind how each of the actors in the little drama—Mr. Sandys, Jack, Guthrie himself, Maud, Mrs. Graves—would each have reason to thank him for having held himself aloof, and for sacrificing his own desires. There was comfort in that thought; and for the first time in these miserable weeks he felt a little glow of self-approval at the consciousness of his own prudence and justice. The best thing, he now reflected, would be to remove himself from the scene altogether for a time, and to return in radiant benevolence, when the affair had settled itself: but Maud—and then there came over him the thought of the girl, her sweetness, her eager delight, her adorable frankness, her innocence, her desire to be in affectionate relations with all who came within reach of her; and the

sense of his own foresight and benevolence was instantly and entirely overwhelmed at the thought of what he had missed, and of what he might have aspired to, if it had not been for just the wretched obstacle of age and circumstance. A few years younger—if he had been that, he could have followed the leading of his heart, and—he dared think no more of what might have been possible.

But what brought matters to a head was a scene that he saw on the following day. He was in the library in the morning; he tried to work, but he could not command his attention. At last he rose and went to the little oriel, which commanded a view of the village green. Just as he did so, he caught sight of two figures—Maud and Guthrie—walking together on the road which led from the Vicarage. They were talking in the plainest intimacy. Guthrie seemed to be arguing some point with laughing insistence, and Maud to be listening in amused delight. Presently they came to a stop, and he could see Maud hold up a finger. Guthrie at once desisted. At this moment a kitten scampered across the green to them sideways, its tail up. Guthrie caught it up, and as he held it in his arms, Howard saw Maud bend over it and caress it. The scene brought an instant conviction to his mind; but presently Maud said a word to her companion, and then came across the green to the Manor, passing in at the gate just underneath him. Howard

stood back that he might not be observed. He saw Maud come in under the gateway, half smiling to herself as at something that had happened. As she did so, she waved her hand to Guthrie, who stood holding the kitten in his arms and looking after her. When she disappeared, he put the kitten down, and then walked back towards the Vicarage.

XXI

THE AWAKENING

Howard spent the rest of the morning in very bitter cogitation; after luncheon, during which he could hardly force himself to speak, he excused himself on the plea of wanting exercise.

It was in a real agony of mind and spirit that he left the house. He was certain now; and he was not only haunted by his loss, but he was horrified at his entire lack of self-control and restraint. His thoughts came in, like great waves striking on a rocky reef, and rending themselves in sheets of scattered foam. He seemed to himself to have been slowly inveigled into his fate by a worse than malicious power; something had planned his doom. He remembered his old tranquillities; his little touch of boredom; and then how easy the descent had been! He had been drawn by a slender thread of circumstance into paying his visit to Windlow; his friendship with Jack had just toppled over the balance; he had gone; then there had come his talk with his aunt, which had wrought him up into a mood of vague excitement. Just at that moment Maud had come in his way; then friendship had followed; and then he had been seized with this

devouring passion which had devastated his heart. He had known all the time that he was too late; and even so he had gone to work the wrong way: it was his infernal diplomacy, his trick of playing with other lives, of yielding to emotional intimacies—that fatal desire to have a definite relation, to mean something to everyone in his circle. Then this wretched, attractive, pleasant youth, with his superficial charm, had intervened. If he had been wise he would never have suggested that visit to Cambridge. Maud had hitherto been just like Miranda on the island; she had never been brought into close contact with a young cavalier; and the subtle instinct of youth had done the rest, the instinct for the equal mate, so far stronger and more subtle than any reasonable or intellectual friendship. And then he, devoured as he had been by his love, had been unable to use his faculties; he could do nothing but glare and wink, while his treasure was stolen from him; he had made mistakes at every turn. What would he not give now to be restored to his old, balanced, easy life, with its little friendships and duties. How fantastic and unreal his aunt's theories seemed to him, reveries contrived just to gild the gaps of a broken life, a dramatisation of emptiness and self-importance. At every moment the face and figure of Maud came before him in a hundred sweet, spontaneous movements—the look of her eyes, the slow thrill of her voice. He

needed her with all his soul—every fibre of his being cried out for her. And then the thought of being thus pitifully overcome, humiliated and degraded him. If she had not been beautiful, he would perhaps never have thought of her except with a mild and courteous interest. This was the draught of life which he had put so curiously to his lips, sweet and heady to taste, but with what infinite bitterness and disgust in the cup. It had robbed him of everything —of his work, of his temperate ecstasies in sight and sound, of his intellectual enthusiasm. His life was all broken to pieces about him ; he had lost at once all interest and all sense of dignity. He was simply a man betrayed by a passion, which had fevered him just because his life had been so orderly and pure. He was not strong enough even to cut himself adrift from it all. He must just welter on, a figure visibly touched by depression and ill-fortune, and hammering out the old grammar-grind. Had any writer, any poet, ever agonised thus ? The people who discoursed glibly about love, and wove their sorrows into elegies, what sort of prurient curs were they ? It was all too bad to think of, to speak of—a mere staggering among the mudflats of life.

In this raging self-contempt and misery, he drew near to the still pool in the valley ; he would sit there and bleed awhile, like the old warrior, but with no hope of revisiting the fight : he would just abandon himself to listless despair for an hour

or two, while the pleasant drama of life went on behind him. Why had he not at least spoken to Maud, while he had time, and secured her loyalty? It was his idiotic deliberation, his love of dallying gently with his emotions, getting the best he could out of them.

Suddenly he saw that there was some one on the stone seat by the spring, and in a moment he saw that it was Maud—and that she had observed him. She looked troubled and melancholy. Had she stolen away here, had she even appointed a place of meeting with the wretched boy? was she vexed at his intrusion? Well, it would have to be faced now. He would go on, he would say a few words, he would at least not betray himself. After all, she had done no wrong, poor child—she had only found her mate; and she at least should not be troubled.

She rose up at his approach; and Howard, affecting a feeble heartiness, said, "Well, so you have stolen away like me! This is a sweet place, isn't it; like an old fairy-tale, and haunted by a Neckan? I won't disturb you—I am going on to the hill—I want a breath of air."

Maud looked at him rather pitifully, and said nothing for a moment. Then she said, "Won't you stay a little and talk to me?—I don't seem to have seen you—there has been so much going on. I want to tell you about my book, you know—I am

going on with that—I shall soon have some more chapters to show you."

She sate down at one end of the bench, and Howard seated himself wearily at the other. Maud glanced at him for a moment, but he said nothing. The sight of her was a sort of torture to him. He longed with an insupportable longing to fling himself down beside her and claim her, despairingly and helplessly. He simply could not frame a sentence.

"You look tired," said Maud. "I don't know what it is, but it seems as if everything had gone wrong since we came to Cambridge. Do tell me what it all is—you can trust me. I have been afraid I have vexed you somehow, and I had hoped we were going to be friends." She leaned her head on her hand, and looked at him. She looked so troubled and so frail, that Howard's heart smote him—he must make an effort; he must not cloud the child's mind; he must just take what she could give him, and not hamper her in any way. The one thing left him was a miserable courtesy, on which he must somehow depend. He forced a sort of smile, and began to talk—his own voice audible to him, strained and ugly, like the voice of some querulous ghost.

"Ah," he said, "as one gets older, one can't always command one's moods. Vexed? Of course, I am not vexed—what put that into your head? It's this

—I can tell you so much! It seems to me that I have been drawn aside out of my old, easy, serene life, into a new sort of life here—and I am not equal to it. I had got so used, I suppose, to picking up other lives, that I thought I could do the same here—and I seem to have taken on more than I could manage. I forgot, I think, that I was getting older, that I had left youth behind. I made the mistake of thinking I could play a new rôle—and I cannot. I am tired —yes, I am deadly tired; and I feel now as if I wanted to get out of it all, and just leave things to work themselves out. I have meddled, and I am being punished for meddling. I have been playing with fire, and I have been burnt. I had thought of a new sort of life. Don't you remember," he added with a smile, "the monkey in Buckland's book, who got into the kettle on the hob, and whenever he tried to leave it, found it so cold outside, that he dared not venture out—and he was nearly boiled alive!"

"No, I *don't* understand," said Maud, with so sudden an air of sorrow and unhappiness that Howard could hardly refrain from taking her into his arms like a tired child and comforting her. "I don't understand at all. You came here, and you fitted in at once, seemed to understand everyone and everything, and gave us all a lift. It is miserable—that you should have brought so much happiness to us, and then have tired of it all. I

don't understand it in the least. Something must have happened to distress you—it can't all go to pieces like this!"

"Oh," said Howard, "I interfered. It is my accursed trick of playing with people, wanting to be liked, wanting to make a difference. How can I explain? . . . Well, I must tell you. You must forgive me somehow! I tried—don't look at me while I say it—I have tried to interfere with *you*. I tried to make a friend of you; and then when you came to Cambridge, I saw I had claimed too much; that your place was not with such as myself—the old, stupid, battered generation, fit for nothing but worrying along. I saw you were young, and needed youth about you. God forgive me for my selfish plans. I wanted to keep your friendship for myself, and when I saw you were attracted elsewhere, I was jealous—horribly, vilely jealous. But I have the grace to despise myself for it, and I won't hamper you in any way. You must just give me what you can, and I will be thankful."

As he spoke he saw a curious light pass into the girl's face—a light of understanding and resolution. He thought that she would tell him that he was right; and he was unutterably thankful to think that he had had the courage to speak—he could bear anything now.

Suddenly she made a swift gesture, bending down to him. She caught his hand in her own, and

pressed her lips to it. "Don't you *see?*" she said. "Attracted by someone . . . by whom? . . . by that wretched little boy? . . . why he amuses me, of course, . . . and you would stand aside for that! You have spoken and I must speak. Why you are everything, everything, all the world to me. It was last Sunday in church . . . do you remember . . . when they said, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth' . . . I looked up and caught your eye, and wondered if you *did* understand. But it is enough—I won't hamper you either. If you want to go back to the old life and live it, I won't say a word. I will be just your most faithful friend—you will allow that?"

The heaven seemed to open over Howard, and the solid earth reeled round him where he sate. It was so, then! He sate for a moment like a man stunned, and then opened his eyes on bliss unutterable. She was close to him, her breath on his cheek, her eyes full of tears. He took her into his arms, and put his lips to hers. "My dearest darling child," he said, "are you sure? . . . I can't believe it. . . . Oh my sweetest, it can't be true. Why, I have loved you with all my soul since that first moment I saw you—indeed it was before; and I have thought of nothing else day and night. . . . What does it all mean . . . the well of life?"

They sate holding each other close. The whole soul of the girl rose to clasp and to greet his, in that

blest fusion of life which seems to have nothing hidden or held back. She made him tell her over and over again the sweet story of his love.

"What *could* I do?" she said. "Why, when I was at Cambridge that week, I didn't dare to claim your time and thought. Why *can't* one make oneself understood? Why, my one hope, all that time, was just for the minutes I got with you; and yet I thought it wasn't fair not to try to seem amused; then I saw you were vexed at something —vexed that I should want to talk to you—what a *wretched* business!"

"Never mind all that now, child," said Howard, "it's a perfect nightmare. Why can't one be simple? Why, indeed? and even now, I simply can't believe it—oh, the wretched hours when I thought you were drifting away from me; do men and women indeed miss their chances so? If I had but known! Yet, I must tell you this—when I first came to this spring here, I thought it held a beautiful secret for me—something which had been in my life from everlasting. It was so, and this was what it held for me."

The afternoon sped swiftly away, and the shadow of the western downs fell across the pool. An immense and overpowering joy filled Howard's heart, and the silent world took part in his ecstasy.

"You remember that first day?" said Maud. "I had felt that day as if some one was coming to me

from a long way off drawing nearer. . . . I saw you drive up in the carriage, and I wondered if we should be friends."

"Yes," said Howard, "it was you on the lawn—that was when I saw you first!"

"And now we must go back and face the music," said Howard. "What do you think? How shall we make it all known? I shall tell Aunt Anne to-night. I shall be glad to do that, because there has fallen a veil between us. Don't forget, dear child, how unutterably wretched and intolerable I have been. She tried to help me out, but I was running with my head down on the wrong track. Oh, what a miserable fool I was! That comes of being so high-minded and superior. If you only knew how solemn I have been! Why couldn't I just speak?"

"You might have spoken any time," said Maud. "Why, I would have walked barefoot to Dorchester and back to please you! It does seem horrible to think of our being apart all that time, out of such beautiful consideration—and you were my own, my very own all the time, every moment."

"I will come and tell your father to-morrow," said Howard presently. "How will Master Jack take it? Will he call you Miss?"

"He may call me what he likes," said Maud. "I shan't get off easily."

"Well, we have an evening and a night and a

morning for our secret," said Howard. "I wish it could be longer. I should like to go on for ever like this, no one knowing but you and me."

"Do just as you like, my lord and master," said Maud.

"I won't have you talk like that," said Howard; "you don't know what you give me. Was ever anyone in the world so happy before?"

"There's one person who is as happy," said Maud; "you can't guess what I feel. Does it sound absurd to say that if you told me to stand still while you cut me into little bits, I should enjoy it?"

"I won't forget that," said Howard; "anything to please you—you need not mind mentioning any little wishes you may have of that kind."

They laughed like children, and when they came to the village, they became very ceremonious. At the Vicarage gate they shook hands, and Howard raised his hat. "You will have to make up for this dignified parting some time," said Howard. "Sleep well, my darling child! If you ever wake, you will know that I am thinking of you; not far apart! Good-night, my sweet one, my only darling."

Maud put one hand on his shoulder, but did not speak—and then slipped in light-footed through the gate. Howard walked back to the Manor, through the charmed dusk and the fragrance of hidden flowers, full of an almost intolerable happiness, that was akin to pain. The evening star hung in

liquid, trembling light above the dark down, the sky fading to a delicious green, the breeze rustled in the heavy-leaved sycamores, and the lights were lit in the cottage windows. Did every home, every hearth, he wondered, mean *that?* Was *that* present in dim and dumb lives, the spirit of love, the inner force of the world. Yes, it was so! That was the secret hidden in the Heart of God.

XXII

LOVE AND CERTAINTY

The weeks that followed were a time for Howard of very singular happiness—happiness of a quality of which he had not thought himself capable, and in the very existence of which he was often hardly able to believe. He had never known what intimate affection was before; and it was strange to him, when he had always been able to advance so swiftly in his relations with others to a point of frankness and even brotherliness, to discover that there was a whole world of emotion beyond that. He was really deeply reserved and reticent; but he admitted even comparative strangers so easily and courteously to his house of life, that few suspected the existence of a secret chamber of thought, with an entrance contrived behind the pictured arras, which was the real fortress of his inner existence, and where he sate oftenest to contemplate the world. That chamber of thought was a place of few beliefs and fewer certainties; if he adopted, as he was accustomed to do, conventional language and conventional ideas, it was only to feel himself in touch with his fellows; for Howard's mind was really a place of suspense and doubt; his scepticism went down to the very roots of life; his imagination was

rich and varied, but he did not trust his hopes or even his fears; all that he was certain of was just the actual passage of his thought and his emotion; he formed no views about the future, and he abandoned the past as one might abandon the débris of the mine.

It was delicious to him to be catechised, questioned, explored by Maud, to have his reserve broken through and his reticence disregarded; but what oftenest brought the great fact of his love home to him with an overpowering certainty of joy was the girl's eager caresses and endearing gestures. Howard had always curiously shrunk from physical contact with his fellows; he had an almost childishly observant eye, and his senses were abnormally alert; little bodily defects and uglinesses had been a horror to him; and the way in which Maud would seek his embrace, clasp his hand, lay her cheek to his, as if nestling home, gave him an enraptured sense of delight that transcended all experience. He was at first in these talks very tender of what he imagined her to believe; but he found that this did not in the least satisfy her, and he gradually opened his mind more and more to her fearless view.

"Are you certain of nothing?" she asked him one day, half mirthfully.

"Yes, of one thing," he said, "of *you!* You are the only real and perfect thing and thought in the world to me—I have always been alone hitherto,"

he added, "and you have come near to me out of the deep—a shining spirit!"

Howard never tired of questioning her in these days as to how her love for him had arisen.

"That is the mystery of mysteries!" he said to her once; "what was it in me or about me to make you care?"

Maud laughed. "Why, you might as well ask a man at a shop," she said, "which particular coin it was that induced him to part with his wares—it's just the price! Why, I cared for you, I think, before I ever saw you, before I ever heard of you; one thinks—I suppose everyone thinks—that there must be one person in the world who is waiting for one—and it seems to me now as if I had always known it was you; and then Jack talked about you, and then you came; and that was enough, though I didn't dare to think you could care for me; and then how miserable I was when you began by seeming to take an interest in me, and then it all drifted away, and I could do nothing to hold it. Howard, why *did* you do that?"

"Oh, don't ask me, darling," he said. "I thought—I thought—I don't know what I did think; but I somehow felt it would be like putting a bird that had sate to sing to me into a cage, if I tried to capture you; and yet I felt it was my only chance. I felt so old. Why you must remember that I was a grown-up man and at work, when you were in long

clothes. And think of the mercy of this—if I had come here, as I ought to have done, and had known you as a little girl, you would have become a sort of niece to me, and all this could never have happened—it would all have been different."

"Well, we won't think of *that*," said Maud decisively. "I was rather a horrid little girl, and I am glad you didn't see me in that stage!"

One day he found her a little sad, and she confessed to having had a melancholy dream. "It was a big place, like a square in a town, full of people," she said. "You came down some steps, looking unhappy, and went about as if you were looking for me; and I could not attract your attention, or get near you; once you passed quite close to me and our eyes met, and I saw you did not recognise me, but passed on."

Howard laughed. "Why, child," he said, "I can't see anyone else but you when we are in the same room together—my faculty of observation has deserted me. I see every movement you make, I feel every thought you think; you have bewitched me! Your face comes between me and my work; you will quite ruin my career. How can I go back to my tiresome boys and my old friends?"

"Ah, I don't want to do *that!*" said Maud. "I won't be a hindrance; you must just hang me up like a bird in a cage—that's what I am—to sing to you when you are at leisure."

XXIII

THE WEDDING

The way in which the people at Windlow took the news was very characteristic. Howard frankly did not care how they regarded it. Mr. Sandys was frankly and hugely delighted. He apologised to Howard for having mentioned the subject of Guthrie to him.

"The way you took it, Howard," he said, "was a perfect model of delicacy and highmindedness! Why, if I had dreamed that you cared for my little girl, I would have said, and truly said, that the dearest wish of my heart had been fulfilled. But one is blind, a parent is blind; and I had somehow imagined you as too sedate, as altogether too much advanced in thought and experience, for such a thing. I would rather have bitten out my tongue than spoken as I did to you. It is exactly what my dear girl needs, some one who is older and wiser than herself—she needs some one to look up to, to revere; she is thoughtful and anxious beyond her years, and she is made to repose confidence in a mind more mature. I do not deny, of course, that your position at Windlow makes the arrangement a still more comfortable one; but I have

always said that my children must marry whom they would; and I should have welcomed you, my dear Howard, as a son-in-law, under any circumstances."

Jack, on the contrary, was rather more cautious in his congratulations. "I am all for things being fixed up as people like," he said, "and I am sure it's a good match for Maud, and all that. But I can't put the two ends together. I never supposed that you would fall in love, any more than that my father would marry again; and when it comes to your falling in love with Maud—well, if you knew that girl as I do, you would think twice! I can't conceive what you will ever have to talk about, unless you make her do essays. It is really rather embarrassing to have a Don for a brother-in-law. I feel as if I should have to say 'we' when I talked to the other Dons, and I shall be regarded with suspicion by the rest of the men. But of course you have my blessing, if you will do it; though if you like to cry off, even now, I will try to keep the peace. I feel rather an ass to have said that about Fred Guthrie; but of course he is hard hit, and I can't think how I shall ever be able to look him in the face. What bothers me is that I never saw how things were going. Well, may it be long before I find myself in the same position! But you are welcome to Missy, if you think you can make anything of her."

Mrs. Graves did little more than express her delight. "It was what I somehow hoped from the first for both of you," she said.

"Well," said Howard, "the only thing that puzzles me is that when you saw—yes, I am sure you saw—what was happening, you didn't make a sign."

"No," said Mrs. Graves, "that is just what one can't do! I didn't doubt that it would come right, I guessed what Maud felt; but you had to find the way to her yourself. I was sure of Maud, you see; but I was not quite sure of you. It does not do to try experiments, dear Howard, with forces as strong as love; I knew that if I told you how things stood, you would have felt bound out of courtesy and kindness to speak, and that would have been no good. If it is illegal to help a man to commit suicide, it is worse, it is wicked to push a man into marriage; but I am a very happy woman now—so happy that I am almost afraid."

Howard talked over his plans with Mrs. Graves; there seemed no sort of reason to defer his wedding. He told her, too, that he had a further plan. There was a system at Beaufort by which, after a certain number of years' service, a Fellow could take a year off duty, without affecting his seniority or his position. "I am going to do this," he said. "I do not think it is unwise. I am too old, I think, both to make Maud's acquaintance as I wish, and to keep

my work going at the same time. It would be impossible. So I will settle down here, if you will let me, and try to understand the place and the people; and then if it seems well, I will go back to Cambridge in October year, and go on with my work. I hope you will approve of that?"

"I do entirely approve," said Mrs. Graves. "I will make over to you at once what you will in any case ultimately inherit—and I believe your young lady is not penniless either? Well, money has its uses sometimes."

Howard did this. Mr. Redmayne wrote him a letter in which affection and cynicism were curiously mingled.

"There will be two to please now instead of one," he wrote. "I do not, of course, approve of Dons marrying. The tender passion is, I believe, inimical to solid work; this I judge from observation rather than from experience. But you will get over all that when you are settled; and then if you decide to return—and we can ill spare you—I hope you will return to work in a reasonable frame of mind. Pray give my respects to the young lady, and say that if she would like a testimonial to your honesty and sobriety, I shall be happy to send her one."

All these experiences, shared by Maud, were absurdly delightful to Howard. She was rather alarmed by Redmayne's letter.

"I feel as if I were doing rather an awful thing,"

she said, "in taking you away like this. I feel like Hotspur's wife and Enid rolled into one. I shouldn't *dare* to go with you at once to Cambridge —I should feel like a Pomeranian dog on a lead."

And so it came to pass that on a certain Monday in the month of September a very quiet little wedding took place at Windlow. The bells were rung, and a hideous object of brushwood and bunting, that looked like the work of a bower-bird, was erected in the road, and called a triumphal arch. Mr. Redmayne insisted on coming, and escorted Monica from Cambridge, "without in any way compromising my honour and virtue," he said: "it must be plainly understood that I have no *intentions*." He made a charming speech at the subsequent luncheon, in which he said that, though he personally regretted the turn that affairs had taken, he could not honestly say that, if matrimony were to be regarded as advisable, his friends could have done better.

The strange thing to Howard was the contrast between his own acute and intolerable nervousness, and the entire and radiant self-possession of Maud. He had a bad hour on the morning of the wedding-day itself. He had a sort of hideous fear that he had done selfishly and perversely, and that it was impossible that Maud could really continue to love him; that he had sacrificed her youth to his fancy, and his vivid imagination saw himself being wheeled

in a bath-chair along the Parade of a health-resort, with Maud in melancholy attendance.

But when he saw his child enter the church, and look up to catch his eye, his fears melted like a vapour on glass ; and his love seemed to him to pour down in a sudden cataract, too strong for a human heart to hold, to meet the exquisite trustfulness and sweetness of his bride, who looked as though the gates of heaven were ajar. After that he saw and heard nothing but Maud. They went off together in the afternoon to a little house in Dorsetshire by a lonely sea-cove, which Mr. Sandys had spent many glorious and important hours in securing and arranging. It was only an hour's journey. If Howard had needed reassuring he had his desire ; for as they drove away from Windlow among the thin cries of the village children, Howard put his arm round Maud, and said " Well, child ? " upon which she took his other hand in both of her own, and dropping her head on his shoulder, said, " Utterly and entirely and absolutely proud and happy and content ! " And then they sate in silence.

XXIV

DISCOVERIES

It was a time of wonderful discoveries for Howard, that month spent in the little house under the cliff and beside the cove. It was a tiny hamlet with half a dozen fishermen's cottages and two or three larger houses, holiday-dwellings for rich people; but there was no one living there, except a family of children with a governess. The house they were in belonged to an artist, and had a big studio in which they mostly sate. An elderly woman and her niece were the servants, and the life was the simplest that could be imagined. Howard felt as if he would have liked it prolonged for ever. They brought a few books with them, but did little else except ramble through the long afternoons in the silent bays. It was warm, bright September weather, still and hazy; and the sight of the dim golden-brown promontories, with pale-green grass at the top, stretching out one beyond another into the distance, became for Howard symbol of all that was most wonderful and perfect in life.

He could not cease to marvel at the fact that this beautiful young creature, full of tenderness and anxious care for others, and with love the one pre-

occupation of her life, should yield herself thus to him with such an entire and happy abandonment. Maud seemed for the time to have no will of her own, no thought except to please him ; he could not get her to express a single preference, and her guileless diplomacy to discover what he preferred amused and delighted him. At the same time the exploration of Maud's mind and thought was an entire surprise to him—there was so much she did not know, so many things in the world, which he took for granted, of which she had never heard ; and yet in many ways he discovered that she knew and perceived far more than he did. Her judgment of people was penetrating and incisive, and was formed quite instinctively, without any apparent reason ; she had, too, a charming gift of humour, and her affection for her own circle did not in the least prevent her from perceiving their absurdities. She was not all loyalty and devotion, nor did she pretend to be interested in things for which she did not care. There were many conventions, which Howard for the first time discovered that he himself unconsciously held, which Maud did not think in the least important. Howard began to see that he himself had really been a somewhat conventional person, with a respect for success and position and dignity and influence. He saw that his own chief motive had been never to do anything disagreeable or unreasonable or original or decisive ; he began

to see that his unconscious aim had been to fit himself in without self-assertion into his circle, and to make himself unobtrusively necessary to people. Maud had no touch of this in her nature at all; her only ambition seemed to be to be loved, which was accompanied by what seemed to Howard a marvellous incapacity for being shocked by anything; she was wholly innocent and ingenuous, but yet he found to his surprise that she knew something of the dark corners of life, and the moral problems of village life were a matter of course to her. He had naturally supposed that a girl would have been fenced round by illusions; but it was not so. She had seen and observed and drawn her conclusions. She thought very little of what one commonly called sins, and her indignation seemed aroused by nothing but cruelty and treachery. It became clear to Howard that Mr. Sandys and Mrs. Graves had been very wise in the matter, and that Maud had not been brought up in any silly ignorance of human frailty. Her religion was equally a surprise to him. He had thought that a girl brought up as Maud had been would be sure to hold a tissue of accepted beliefs which he must be careful not to disturb. But here again she seemed to have little but a few fine principles, set in a simple Christian framework. They were talking about this one day, and Maud laughed at something he said.

"You need not be so cautious," she said, "though I like you to be cautious—you are afraid of hurting me; but you won't do that! Cousin Anne taught me long ago that it was no use believing anything unless you understood more or less where it was leading you. It's no good pretending to know. Cousin Anne once said to me that one had to choose between science and superstition. I don't know anything about science, but I'm not superstitious."

"Yes," said Howard, "I see—I won't be fussy any more; I will just speak as I think. You are wiser than the aged, child! You will have to help me out. I am a mass of crusted prejudices, I find; but you are melting them all away. What beats me is how you found it all out."

Thus the hours they spent together became to Howard not only a source of joy, but an extraordinary simplification of everything. Maud seemed to have lived an absolutely uncalculating life, without any idea of making any position for herself at all; and it sickened Howard to think how so much of his own existence had been devoted to getting on the right side of people, driving them on a light rein, keeping them deftly in his own control. Maud laughed at this description of himself, and said, "Yes, but of course that was your business. I should have been a very tiresome kind of Don; we don't either of us want to punish people, but I

want to alter them. I can't bear stupid people, I think. I had rather people were clever and unsatisfactory than dull and good. If they are dull there's no reason for their being good. I like people to have reasons ! "

They talked—how often they did that !—about the complications that had beset them.

" The one thing I can't make out," said Maud, " is how or why you ever thought I cared for that little boy. He was such a nice boy ; but he had no reasons. Oh, dear, how wretched he made me ! "

" Well," said Howard, " I must ask you this—what did really happen on that awful afternoon at the Folly ? "

Maud covered her face with her hands. " It was too dreadful ! " she said. " First of all, you were looking like Hamlet—you don't know how romantic you looked ! I did really believe that you cared for me then—I couldn't help it—but there was some veil between us ; and the number of times I telegraphed from my brain to you that day, ' Can't you understand ? ' was beyond counting. I suppose it was very unmaidenly, but I was past that. Then there was that horrible imitation ; such a disgusting parody ! and then I was prouder of you than ever, because you really took it so well. I was too angry after that for anything, and when you went off with father, and Monica sketched and Jack lay down and smoked, Freddy Guthrie

walked off with me, and I said to him, 'I really cannot think how you dared to do that—I think it was simply shameful!' Well, he got quite white, and he did not attempt to excuse himself; and I believe I said that if he did not put it straight with you, I would never speak to him again: and then I rather repented; and then he began making love to me, and said the sort of things people say in books. Howard, I believe that people really do talk like books when they get excited—at all events it was like a bad novel! But I was very stern—I can be very stern when I am angry—and said I would not hear another word, and would go straight back if he said any more; and then he said something about wanting to be friends, and wanting to have some hope; and then I got suddenly sorry about it all—it seemed such a waste of time—and shook hands with him, feeling as if I was acting in an absurd play, and said that of course we were friends; and I think I insisted again on his apologising to you, and he said that I seemed to care more for your peace of mind than his; and I simply walked away and he followed, and I shouldn't be surprised if he was crying; it was all like a nightmare; but I did somehow contrive to make it up with him later, and told him that I thought him a very nice boy indeed."

"I daresay that was a great comfort to him," said Howard.

"I meant it to be," said Maud, "but I did not feel I could go on acting in a sort of melodrama."

"Now, I am very inquisitive," said Howard, "and you needn't answer me if you don't like—but that day that I met you going away from Aunt Anne—oh, what a pig I was! I was at the top of my highminded game—what had happened then?"

"Of course I will tell you," said Maud, "if you want to know. Well, I rather broke down, and said that things had gone wrong; that you had begun by being so nice to me, and we seemed to have made friends; and that then a cloud had come between us: and then Cousin Anne said it would be all right, she *knew;* and she said some things about you I won't repeat, to save your modesty; and then she said, 'Don't be *afraid*, Maud! don't be ashamed of caring for people! Howard is used to making friends with boys, and he is puzzled by you; he wants a friend like you, but he is afraid of caring for people. You are not afraid of him nor he of you, but he is afraid of his own fear.' She did not seem to know how I cared, but she put it all right somehow; she prayed with me, for courage and patience; and I felt I could afford to wait and see what happened."

"And then?" said Howard.

"Why, you know the rest!" said Maud. "I saw as we sate by the wall, in a flash, that you did indeed care for me, and I thought to myself, 'Here

is the best thing in the world, and we can't be going to miss it out of politeness ; ' and then it was all over in a moment ! "

" Politeness ! " said Howard, " yes, it was all politeness ; that's my greatest sin. Yes," he added, " I do thank God with all my heart for your sweet courage that day ! " He drew Maud's hand into his own, as they sate together on the grass just above the shingle of the little bay, where the sea broke on the sands with crisp wavelets, and ran like a fine sheet of glass over the beach. " Look at this little hand," he said, " and let me try to believe that it is given me of its own will and desire ! "

" Yes," said Maud, smiling, " and you may cut it off at the wrist if you like—I won't even wince. I have no further use for it, I believe ! " Howard folded it to his heart, and felt the little pulse beat in the slender wrist ; and presently the sun went down, a ball of fire into the opalescent sea-line.

XXV

THE NEW KNOWLEDGE

But the weeks which followed Howard's marriage were a great deal more than a refreshing discovery of companionable and even unexpected qualities. There was something which came to him, of which the words, the gestures, the signs of love seemed like faint symbols; the essence of it was obscure to him; it reminded him of how, as a child, a laughing group of which he was one had joined hands to receive a galvanic shock; the circle had dislinked again in a moment, with cries of surprise and pleasure; but to Howard it had meant much more than that; the current gave him a sense of awful force and potency, the potency of death. What was this strange and fearful essence which could pass instantaneously through a group—swifter even than thought—and leave the nerves for a moment paralysed and tingling? Even so it was with him now. What was happening to him he did not know—some vast and cloudy presence, at which he could not even dare to look, seemed winging its way overhead, the passage of which he could only dimly discern, as a man might discern the flight of an eagle in a breeze-ruffled mountain pool.

He had come in contact with a force of incalculable energy and joy, which was different, not in degree but in kind, from all previous emotional experiences. He understood for the first time the meaning of words like "mystical" and "spiritual," words which he had hitherto almost derided as unintelligent descriptions of subjective impressions. He had thought them to be terms expressive of vague and even muddled emotions of which scientific psychology would probably dispose. It was a new element and a new force, of which he felt overwhelmingly certain, though he could offer no proof, tangible or audible, of its existence. He had before always demanded that anyone who attempted to uphold the existence of any psychic force should at the same time offer an experimental test of its actuality. But he was here faced with an experience transcendental and subjective, of which he could give no account that would not sound like some imaginative exaggeration. He was not even sure that Maud felt it, or rather he suspected that the experience of wedded love was to her the heightening and emphasizing of something which she had always known.

The essence of it was that it was like the inrush of some moving tide through an open sluice-gate. Till then it seemed to him that his emotions had been tranquilly discharging themselves, like the water which drips from the edge of a fountain basin ;

that now something stronger and larger seemed to flow back upon him, something external and prodigious, which at the same time seemed, not only to invade and permeate his thought but to become one with himself; that was the wonder; it did not seem to him like something added to his spirit, but as though his soul were enlarged and revived by a force which was his own all the time, an unclaimed, unperceived part of himself.

He said something of this to Maud, speaking of the happiness that she had brought him. She said, "Ah, you can't expect me to realise that! I feel as though you were giving everything and receiving nothing, as if I were one more of the duties you had adopted. Of course, I hope that I may be of some use, some time; but I feel at present as if you had been striding on your way somewhere, and had turned aside to comfort and help a little child by the roadside who had lost his way!"

"Oh," said Howard, "it's not that; it isn't only that you are the joy and light of my life; it is that something very far away and powerful had come nearer to both of us, and had lifted us on its wings—what if it were God?"

"Yes," said Maud musingly, "I think it is that!"

XXVI

LOVE IS ENOUGH

The days slipped past, one by one, with an incredible swiftness. For the first time in his life Howard experienced the extraordinary sensation of having nothing to do, no plans ahead, nothing but the delight of the hour to taste. One day he said to Maud, "It seems almost wicked to be so deliciously idle—some day I suppose we must make some plans. But I do not seem ever to have lived before; and all that I ever did and thought of seems as small and trivial as a little town seen from the top of a tower—one can't conceive what the little creatures are about in their tiny slits of streets and stuffy houses, crawling about like beetles on some ridiculous business. The first thing I shall do when I get back will be to burn my old book; such wretched, stodgy, unenlightened stuff as it all is; like the fancies of a blind man about the view of a landscape."

"Oh no, you mustn't do that," said Maud. "I have set my heart on your writing a great book. You must do that—you must finish this one. I am not going to keep you all to myself, like a man pushing about a perambulator."

"Well, I will begin a new book," said Howard,

" and steal an old title. It shall be called *Love is Enough*."

On the last night before they left the cottage they talked long about things past, present, and to come.

" Now," said Maud, " I am not going to be a gushing and sentimental young bride any more. I am not sentimental, best-beloved! Do you believe that ? The time we have had here together has been the best and sweetest time of my whole life, every minute worth all the years that went before. But you must write that down, as Dr. Johnson said, in the first page of your pocket-book, and never speak of it again. It's all too good and too sacred to talk about—almost to think about. And I don't believe in looking *back*, Howard—nor very much, I think, in looking forward. I know that I wasted ever so much time and energy as a girl—how long ago that seems !—in wishing I had done this and that ; but it's neither useful nor pleasant. Now we have got things to do. There is plenty to do at Windlow for a little for you and me. We have got to know everybody and understand everybody. And I think that when the year is out, we must go back to Cambridge. I can't bear to think I have stopped that. I am not going to hoard you, and cling round you. You have got things to do for other people, young men in particular, which no one else can do just like you. I am not a bit ambitious. I don't want you to be M.P.,

LL.D., F.R.S., &c., &c., &c., but I do want you to do things, and to help you to do things. I don't want to be a sort of tea-table Egeria to the young men—I don't mean that—and I don't wish to be an interesting and radiant object at dinner-tables; but I am sure there is trouble I can save you, and I don't intend you to have any worries except your own. I won't smudge my fingers over the accounts, like that wretched Dora in *David Copperfield.* Understand that, Howard; I won't be your girl-bride. I won't promise that I won't wear spectacles and be dowdy—anything to be prosaic!"

"You may adorn yourself as you please," said Howard, "and of course, dearest child, there are hundreds of things you can do for me. I am the feeblest of managers; I live from hand to mouth; but I am not going to submerge you either. If you won't be the girl-bride, you are not to be the professional sunbeam either. You are to be just yourself, the one real, sweet, and perfect thing in the world for me. χαῖρε κεχαριτωμένη—do you know what that means? It was the angel's opinion long ago of a very simple mortal. We shall affect each other, sure enough, as the days go on. Why what you have done for me already, I dare hardly think—you have made a man out of a machine—but we won't go about trying to revise each other; that will take care of itself. I only want you as you are—the best thing in the world."

The last morning at Lydstone they were very silent; they took one long walk together, visiting all the places where they had sate and lingered. Then in the afternoon they drove away. The old maidservant gave them, with almost tearful apologies, two little ill-tied posies of flowers, and Maud kissed her, thanked her, made her promise to write. As they drove away Maud waved her hand to the little cove—"Good-bye, Paradise!" she said.

"No," said Howard, "don't say that; the swallow doesn't make the summer; and I am carrying the summer away with me."

XXVII

THE NEW LIFE

The installation at Windlow seemed as natural and obvious as any other of the wonderful steps of Howard's new life. The only thing which bothered him was the incursions of callers, to which his marriage seemed to have rendered the house liable. Howard loved monotony, and in the little Windlow party he found everything that he desired. At first it all rather amused him, because he felt as though he were acting in a charming and absurd play, and he was delighted to see Maud act her wedded part. Mrs. Graves frankly enjoyed seeing people of any sort or kind. But Howard gradually began to find that the arrival of county and clerical neighbours was a really tiresome thing. Local gossip was unintelligible to him and did not interest him. Moreover, the necessity of going out to luncheon, and even to dinner, bored him horribly. He said once rather pettishly to Maud, after a week of constant interruptions and little engagements, that he hoped that this sort of thing would not continue.

"It seems to knock everything on the head," he went on; "these country idylls are all very well

in their way; but when it comes to entertaining parties day by day, who 'sit simply chatting in a rustic row,' it becomes intolerable. It doesn't *mean* anything; one can't get to know these people; if there is anything to know, they seem to think it polite to conceal it; it can't be a duty to waste all the time that this takes up?"

Maud laughed and said, "Oh, you must forgive them; they haven't much to do or talk about, and you are a great excitement; and you are really very good to them!"

Howard made a grimace. "It's my wretched habit of civility!" he said. "But really, Maud, you can't *like* them?"

"Yes, I believe I do," said Maud. "But then I am more or less used to the kind of thing. I like people, I think!"

"Yes, so do I, in a sort of way," said Howard; "but, really, with some of these caravans it is more like having a flock of sheep in the place!"

"Well, I like *sheep*, then," said Maud; "I don't really see how we can stop it."

"I suppose it's the seamy side of marriage!" said Howard.

Maud looked at him for a moment, and then, getting up from her chair and coming across to him, she put her hands on his shoulders and looked in his face.

"Are you *vexed?*" she said in rather a tragic tone.

"No, of course, not vexed," said Howard, catching her round the waist. "What an idea! I am only jealous of everything which seems to come in between us, and I have seemed to see you lately through a mist of oddly dressed females. It's a system, I suppose, a social system, to enable people to waste their time. I feel as if I had got caught in a sort of glue—wading in glue. One ought to live life, or the best part of it, on one's own lines. I feel as if I was on show just now, and it's a nuisance."

"Well," said Maud, "I am afraid I do rather like showing you off and feeling grand; but it won't go on for ever. I'll try to contrive something. I don't see why you need be drawn in. I'll talk to Cousin Anne about it."

"But I am not going to mope alone," said Howard. "Where thou goest, I will go. I can't bear to let you out of my sight, you little witch! But I feel it is casting pearls before swine—your pearls, I mean."

"I don't see what to do," said Maud, looking rather troubled. "I ought to have seen that you hated it."

"No, it's my own stupid fault," said Howard. "You are right, and I am wrong. I see it is my business at present to go about like a dancing bear, and I'll dance, I'll dance! It's priggish to think about wasting one's sweetness. What I really feel

is this. 'Here's an hour,' I say, 'when I might have had Maud all to myself, and she and I have been talking about the weather to a pack of unoccupied females.' "

"Something comes of it," said Maud. "I don't know what it is, but it's a kind of chain. I don't think it matters much what they talk about, but there is a sort of kindness about it which I like—something which lies behind ideas. These people don't say anything, but they think something into one—it's alive, and it moves."

"Oh, yes," said Howard, "it's alive, no doubt. It would amuse me a good deal to see these people at home, if I could just be hidden in the curtains, and hear what they really talked about, and what they really felt. It's when they have their armour on that they bore me. It is not a pretty armour, and they don't wear it well; they don't fight in it—they only wear it that you mayn't touch them. If they would give themselves away and talk like Miss Bates, I could stand it."

"Well," said Maud, "I am going to say something rather bold. It comes, I think, of living at Cambridge with clever people, and having real things to talk about, that makes your difficulty. You care about people's minds more than about themselves, perhaps? But I'm on their level, and they seem to me to be telling something about themselves all the time. Of course it must be

ghastly for you, and we will try to arrange things better."

"No, dearest, you won't, and you mustn't," said Howard. "That's the best of marriage, that one does get a glimpse into different things. You are perfectly and entirely right. It simply means that I can't talk their language, and I will learn it. I am a prig; your husband is a prig—but he will try to do better. It isn't a duty, and it isn't a pleasure, and it isn't a question of minds at all. It is just living life on ordinary terms. I won't have anything different at all. I'm ashamed of myself for my moans. When I have anything in the way of work to do, it may be different. But now I see what I have to do. I am suffering from the stupidity of so-called clever people; and you mustn't mind it. Only don't, for Heaven's sake, try to contrive, or to spare me things. That is how the ugly paterfamilias is made. You mustn't spoil me or manage me; if I ever suspect you of doing that, I'll just go back to Cambridge alone. I hate even to have made you look at me as you did just now—you must forgive me that and many other things; and now you must promise just this, that if I am snappish you won't give way; you must not become a slipper-warmer."

"Yes, yes, I promise," said Maud, laughing; "here's my hand on it! You shall be diligently henpecked. But I am always rather puzzled about

these things ; all these old ideas about mutual consolation and advice and improvement and support ought to be *there*—they all mean something—they mean a great deal ! But the moment they are spoken about, or even thought about, they seem so stuffy and disgusting. I don't understand it ! I feel that one ought to be able to talk plainly about anything ; and yet the more plainly you talk about such things as these, the more hateful you are, and the meaner you feel ! "

XXVIII

THE VICAR'S VIEW

Another small factor which caused Howard some discomfort was the conversation of the Vicar. This, at the first sight of Windlow, had been one of the salient features of the scene. It had been amusing to see the current of a human mind running so frankly open to inspection; and, moreover, the Vicar's constantly expressed deference for the exalted quality of Howard's mind and intellectual outfit, though it had not been seriously regarded, had at least an emollient effect. But it is one thing to sit and look on at a play and to be entertained by the comic relief of some voluble character, and quite another to encounter that volubility at full pressure in private life. There was a certain charm at first in the Vicar's inconsequence and volatility; but in daily intercourse the good man's lack of proportion, his indiscriminate interest in things in general, proved decidedly fatiguing. Given a crisis, and the Vicar's view was interesting, because it was, as a rule, exactly the view which the average man would be likely to take, melodramatic, sentimental, commonplace, with this difference, that whereas the average man is tongue-tied and has

no faculty of expression, the Vicar had an extraordinarily rich and emphatic vocabulary; and it was thus an artistic presentment of the ordinary standpoint. But in daily life the Vicar talked with impregnable continuity about any subject in which he happened to be interested. He listened to no comment; he demanded no criticism. If he conversed about his parishioners or his fellow-parsons or his country neighbours, it was not uninteresting; but when it was genealogy or folklore or prehistoric remains, it was merely a tissue of scraps, clawed out of books and imperfectly remembered. Howard found himself respecting the Vicar more and more; he was so kindly, so unworldly, so full of perfectly guileless satisfaction. He was conscious too of his own irrepressibility. He said to Howard one day, as they were walking together, "Do you know, Howard, I often think how many blessings you have brought us—I assure you, quiet and modest as you are, you are felt, your influence permeates to the very ends of the parish; I cannot exactly say what it is, but there's a sense of something that has to be dealt with, to be reckoned with, a mind of force and energy in the background; your approval is valued, your disapproval is feared. There is a consciousness, not perhaps expressed or even actually realised, of condescension, of gratification at one from so different a sphere coming among us, sharing our problems,

offering us, however unobtrusively, sympathy and fellow-feeling. It's very human, very human," said the Vicar, "and that's a large word! But among all the blessings which I say you have brought us, of course my dear girl's happiness must come first in my regard; and there I hardly know how to express what a marvellous difference you have made! And then I feel that I, too, have come in for some crumbs from the feast, like the dogs under the table mentioned so eloquently in Scripture—sustenance unregarded and unvalued, no doubt, by yourself—cast out inevitably and naturally as light from the sun! It is not only the actual *dicta*," said the Vicar, "though these alone are deeply treasured; it's the method of thought, the reserve, the refinement, which I find insensibly affecting my own mental processes. Before I was a mere collector of details. Now I find myself saying, 'What is the aim of all this? What is the synthesis? Where does it come in? Where does it tend to?' I have not as yet found any very definite answer to these self-questionings, but the new spirit, the synthetic spirit, is there; and I find myself too concentrating my expression; I have become conscious in your presence of a certain diffuseness of talk—I used, I think, to indulge much in synonyms and parallel clauses—a characteristic, I have seen it said, of our immortal Shakespeare himself—but I have found myself lately considering the aim, the effect, the

form of my utterances, and have practised—mainly in my sermons—a certain economy of language, which I hope has been perceptible to other minds besides my own."

"I always think your sermons very good," said Howard, quite sincerely; "they seem to me arrows deliberately aimed at a definite target—they have the grace of congruity, as the articles say."

"You are very good," said the Vicar. "I am really overwhelmed; but I must admit that your presence—the mere chance of your presence—has made me exercise an unwonted caution, and indeed introduce now and then an idea which is perhaps rather above the comprehension of my flock!"

"But may I go back for one moment?" said Howard. "You will forgive my asking this—but what you said just now about Maud interested me very much, and of course pleased me enormously. I would do anything I could to make her happy in any way—I wish you would tell me how and in what you think her more content. I want to learn all I can about her earlier days—you must remember that all that is unknown to me. Won't you exercise your powers of analysis for my benefit?"

"You are very kind," said the Vicar in high delight; "let me see, let me see! Well, dear Maud as a girl had always a very high and anxious sense of responsibility and duty. She conceived of herself —perhaps owing to some chance expressions of my

own—as bound as far as possible to fill the place of her dear mother—a gap, of course, that it was impossible to fill,—my own pursuits are, you will realise, mere distractions, or, to be frank, were originally so designed, to combat my sense of loss. But I am personally not a man who makes a morbid demand for sympathy—I have little use for sympathy. I face my troubles alone ; I suffer alone," said the Vicar with an incredible relish. " And then Jack is an independent boy, and has no taste for being dominated. So that I fear that dear Maud's most touching efforts hardly fell on very responsive soil. She felt, I think, the failure of her efforts ; and kind as Cousin Anne is, there is, I think, a certain vagueness of outline about her mind. I would not call her a fatalist, but she has little conception of the possibility of moulding character ;—it's a rich mind, but perhaps an indecisive mind ? Maud needed a vocation—she needed an aim. And then, too, you have perhaps observed—or possibly," said the Vicar gleefully, " she has effaced that characteristic out of deference to your own great power of amiable toleration—but she had a certain incisiveness of speech which had some power to wound ? I will give you a small instance. Gibbs, the schoolmaster, is a very worthy man, but he has a certain flightiness of manner and disposition. Dear Maud, talking about him one day at our luncheon-table, said that one read in books how some people had to

struggle with some underlying beast in their constitution, the voracious man, let us say, with the pig-like element, the cruel man with the tiger-like quality. ' Mr. Gibbs,' she said, ' seems to me to be struggling not with a beast, but with a bird.' She went on very amusingly to say that he reminded her of a wagtail, tripping along with very short steps, and only saved by adroitness from overbalancing. It was a clever description of poor Gibbs—but I felt it somehow to be indiscreet. Well, you know, poor Gibbs came to me a few days later—you realise how gossip spreads in these places —and said that he was hurt in his mind to think that Miss Maud should call him a water-wagtail. Servants' tattle, I suppose. I was considerably annoyed at this, and Maud insisted on going to apologise to Gibbs, which was a matter of some delicacy, because she could not deny that she had applied the soubriquet—or is it sobriquet ?—to him. That is just a minute instance of the sort of thing I mean."

" I confess," said Howard, " that I do recognise Maud's touch—she has a strong sense of humour."

" A somewhat dangerous thing," said Mr. Sandys. " I have a very strong sense of humour myself, or rather what might be called risibility. No one enjoys a witty story or a laughable incident more than I do. But I keep it in check. The indulgence of humour is a risky thing ; not very con-

sistent with the pastoral office. But that is a small point; and what I am leading up to is this, that dear Maud's restlessness, and even morbidity, has entirely disappeared; and this, my dear Howard, I attribute entirely to your kind influence and discretion, of which we are all so conscious, and to the consciousness of which it is so pleasant to be able to give leisurely expression."

But the Vicar was not always so fruitful a talker as this. The difficulty with him was to shift the points. There were long walks in Mr. Sandys' company which were really of an almost nightmare quality. He had a way of getting into a genealogical mess, in which he used to say that it cleared the air to be able to state the difficulties.

Howard used to grumble a little over this to Mrs. Graves. "Yes," she said, "if Frank were not so really unselfish a man, he would be a bore of purest ray serene; but his humanity breaks through. I made a compact with him long ago, and told him plainly that there were certain subjects he must not talk to me about. I suppose you couldn't do that?"

"No," said Howard, "I can't do that. It's my greatest weakness, I believe, that I can't say a good-natured decisive thing, until I am really brought to bay—and then I say much more than I need, and not at all good-naturedly. I must get what fun out of Frank I can. There's a good deal

sprinkled about; and one comfort is that Maud understands."

"Yes," said Mrs. Graves, "she understands! I know no one who sees weaknesses in so absolutely clear a light as Maud, and who can at the same time so wholly neglect them in the light of love."

"That's good news for me," said Howard, "and it is absolutely true."

XXIX

THE CHILD

The day on which Howard learned that Maud would bear him a child was a day of very strangely mixed emotions. He saw how the hope dawned on the spirit of Maud like the rising of a star, and he could rejoice in that with whole-hearted joy, in the mere sharing of a beautiful secret; but it was strange to him to see how to Maud it seemed like the realisation and fulfilling of all desire, the entering into a kingdom; it was not only the satisfaction of all the deepest vital processes, but something glorious, unthinkable, the crowning of destiny, the summit of life. There was no reasoning about it; it was the purest and finest instinct. But with Howard it was not thus. He could not look beyond Maud; and it seemed to him like the dawning of a new influence, a new fealty, which would almost come in between him and his wife, a division of her affections. She seemed to him, in the few tremulous words they spoke, to have her eyes fixed on something beyond him; it was not so much a gift that she was bringing him as a claim of further devotion. He realised with a shock of surprise that in the books he had read, in the

imagined crises of life, the thought of the child, the heir, the offshoot, was supposed to come as the crown of father's and mother's hopes alike, and that it was not so with him. Was he jealous of the new claim? It was something like that. He found himself resolving and determining that no hint of this should ever escape him; he even felt deeply ashamed that such a thought should even have crossed his mind. He ought rather to rejoice wholly and completely in Maud's happiness; but he desired her alone, and so passionately that he could not bear to have any part of the current of her soul diverted from him. As he looked forward through the years, it was Maud and himself, in scene after scene; other relations, other influences, other surroundings might fade and decay—but children, however beautiful and delightful, making the house glad with life and laughter, he was not sure that he wanted them. Yet he had always thought that he possessed a strong paternal instinct, an interest in young life, in opening problems. Had that all, he wondered, been a mere interest, a thing to exercise his energy and amiability upon, and had his enjoyment of it all depended upon his real detachment, upon the fact that his responsibility was only a temporary one? It was all very bewildering to him. Moreover, his quiet and fertile imagination flashed suddenly through pictures of what his beloved Maud might have

to endure, such a frail child as she was—illness, wretchedness, suffering. Would he be equal to all that? Could he play the rôle of tranquil patience, of comforting sympathy? He determined not to anticipate that, but it blew like a cold wind on his spirit; he could not bear that the sunshine of life should be clouded.

He had a talk with his aunt on the subject; she had divined, in some marvellous way, the fact that the news had disturbed him; and she said, "Of course, dear Howard, I quite understand that this is not the same thing to you as it is to Maud and me. It is one of the things which divide, and must always divide, men from women. But there is something beyond what you see: I know that it must seem to you as if something almost disconcerting had passed over life—as if such a hope must absorb the heart of a mother; but there is a thing you cannot know, and that is the infinite dearness in which this involves you. You would think perhaps that it could not be increased in Maud's case, but it is increased a hundredfold—it is a splendour, a worship, as of divine creative power. Don't be afraid! Don't look forward! You will see day by day that this has brought Maud's love for you to a point of which you could hardly dream. Words can't touch these things: you must just believe me that it is so. You will think that a childless wife like myself cannot know this. There is a strange joy

even in childlessness, but it is the joy that comes from the sharing of a sorrow; but the joy which comes from sharing a joy is higher yet."

"Yes," said Howard, "I know it, and I believe it. I will tell you very frankly that you have looked into my very heart; but you have not seen quite into the depths: I see my own weakness and selfishness clearly. With every part of my mind and reason I see the wonder and strength of this; and I shall feel it presently. What has shocked me is just my lack of the truer instinct; but then," he added, smiling, "that's just the shadow of comfort and ease and the intellectual life: one goes so far on one's way without stumbling across these big emotions; and when one does actually meet them, one is frightened at their size and strength. You must advise and help me. You know, I am sure, that my love for Maud is the strongest, largest, purest thing, beyond all comparison and belief, that has ever happened to me. I am never for a single instant unaware of it. I sometimes think there is nothing else left of me; and then this happens, and I see that I have not gone deep enough yet."

"Yes," said Mrs. Graves, smiling, "life is like the sea, I think. When one is a child, it is just a great plain of waters, with little ships sailing on it: it is pleasant to play by, with breaking waves to wade in, and little treasures thrown up on its rim; then,

as one knows more, one realises that it is another world, full of its own urgent life, quite regardless of man, and over which man has no power, except by a little trickery in places. Man is just a tiresome, far-off incident, his ships like little moving shadows, his nets and lines like small fretful devices. But the old wise monsters of the depths live their own lives; never seen perhaps, or even suspected, by men. That's all very silly and fanciful, of course! But old and invalided as I am, I seem to be diving deeper and deeper into life, and finding it full of surprises and mysteries and utterly unexpected things."

"Well," said Howard, "I am still a child on the shore, picking up shells, fishing in the shallows. But I have learned something of late, and it is wonderful beyond thought—so wonderful that I feel sometimes as if I was dreaming, and should wake up to find myself in some other century!"

It did indeed soon dawn upon Howard that there was a change in Maud, that their relations had somehow altered and deepened. The little barrier of age, for one thing, which he had sometimes felt, seemed obliterated. There had been in Howard's mind a sense that he had known a number of hard facts and ugly features about life, had been aware of mean, combative, fierce, cruel elements which were hidden from Maud. Now this all seemed to be purged away; if these things were there, they

were not worth knowing, except to be disregarded. They were base material knowledge which one must not even recognise ; they were not real forces at all, only ugly, stubborn obstacles, through which life must pass, like water flowing among rocks ; they were not life, only the channel of life, through which one passed to something more free and generous. He began to perceive that such things mattered nothing at all to Maud ; that her life would have been just as fine in quality if she had lived in the smallest cottage among the most sordid cares. He saw that she possessed the wisdom which he had missed, because she lived in and for emotion and affection, and that all material things existed only to enshrine and subserve emotion.

Their life seemed to take on a new colour and intensity. They talked less ; up till now it had been a perpetual delight to Howard to elicit Maud's thoughts and fancies about a thousand things, about books, people, ideas. Her prejudices, ignorances, enthusiasms half charmed, half amused him. But now they could sit or walk silent together in an even more tranquil happiness ; nearness was enough, and thought seemed to pass between them without need of speech. Howard began to resume his work ; it was enough that Maud should sit by, reading, working, writing. A glance would pass between them and suffice.

One day Howard laid down his pen, and looking

up, having finished a chapter, saw that Maud's eyes were fixed upon him with an anxious intentness. She was sitting in a low chair near the fire, and an open book lay disregarded on her knee. He went across to her and sat down on a low chair beside her, taking her hand in his.

"What is it, dear child?" he said. "Am I very selfish and stupid to sit here without a word like this?"

Maud put her lips to his hand, and laughed a contented laugh. "Oh no, no," she said; "I like to see you hard at work—there seems no need to say anything—it's just you and me!"

"Well," said Howard, "you must just tell me what you were thinking—you had travelled a long way beyond that."

"Not out of your reach," said Maud; "I was just thinking how different men and women were, and how I liked you to be different. I was remembering how awfully mysterious you were at first—so full to the brim of strange things which I could not fathom. I always seemed to be dislodging something I had never thought of. I used to wonder how you could find time, in the middle of it all, to care about me: you were always giving me something. But now it has all grown so much simpler and more wonderful too. It's like what you said about Cambridge long ago, the dark secret doorways, the hidden gardens; I see now that all

those ideas and thoughts are only things you are carrying with you, like luggage. They are not part of you at all. Don't you know how, when one is quite a child, a person's house seems to be all a mysterious part of himself? One thinks he has chosen and arranged it all, knows where everything is and what it means—everything seems to be a sort of deliberate expression of his tastes and ideas—and then one gets older, and finds out that people don't know what is in their houses at all—there are rooms into which they never go; and then one finds that they don't even see the things in their own rooms, have forgotten how they came there, wouldn't know if they were taken away. Why, I used to feel as if the scents and smells of houses were all arranged and chosen by their owners. It's like that with you; all the things you know and remember, the words you speak, are not *you* at all; I see and feel you now apart from all that."

"I am afraid I have lost what novelists call my glamour," said Howard. "You have found me out, the poor, shivering, timid thing that sits like a wizard in the middle of his properties, only hoping that the stuffed crocodile and the skeleton will frighten his visitors."

Maud laughed. "Well, I am not frightened any more," she said. "I doubt if you could frighten me if you tried. I wonder how I should feel if I saw you angry or chilly. Are you ever angry, I wonder?"

"I think some of my pupils would say that I could be very disagreeable," said Howard. "I don't think that I was ever very fierce, but I have realised that I was on occasions very unpleasant."

"Well, I'll wait and see," said Maud; "but what I was going to say was that you seem to me different —hardly the person I married. I used to wonder a little at first how I had had the impudence . . . and then I used to think that perhaps some day you would wake up, and find you had come to the bottom of the well, but you never seemed disappointed."

"Disappointed!" said Howard; "what terrible rubbish! Why Maud, don't you *know* what you have done for me? You have put the whole thing straight. It's just that. I was full of vanities and thoughts and bits of knowledge, and I really think I thought them important—they *are* important too, like food and drink—one must have them—at least men must—but they don't matter; at least it doesn't matter what they are. Men have always to be making and doing things—business, money, positions, duties; but the point is to know that they are unimportant, and yet to go on doing them as if they mattered—one must do that—seriously and not solemnly; but you have somehow put all that in the right place; and I know now what matters and what does not. There, do you call that nothing?"

"Perhaps we have found it out together," said

Maud; "the only difference is that you have the courage to tell me that you were wrong, while I have never even dared to tell you what a hollow sham I am, and what a mean and peevish child I was before you came on the scene."

"Well, we won't look into your dark past," said Howard. "I am quite content with what they call the net result!" and then they sate together in silence, and had no further need of words.

XXX

CAMBRIDGE AGAIN

Howard was summoned to Cambridge in June for a College meeting. He was very glad to see Cambridge and the familiar faces; but he had not been parted from Maud for a day since their marriage, and he was rather amazed to find, not that he missed her, but how continuously he missed her from moment to moment; the fact that he could not compare notes with her about every incident seemed to rob the incidents of their savour, and to produce a curious hampering of his thoughts. A change, too, seemed to have passed over the College; his rooms were just as he had left them, but everything seemed to have narrowed and contracted. He saw a great many of the undergraduates, and indeed was delighted to find how they came in to see him.

Guthrie was one of the first to arrive, and Howard was glad to meet him alone. Howard was sorry to see that the cheerful youth had evidently been feeling acutely what had happened; he had not lost his spirits, but he had a rather worn aspect. He inquired about the Windlow party, and they talked of indifferent things; but when Guthrie

rose to go, he said, speaking with great diffidence, "I wanted to say one thing to you, and now I do not know how to express it; it is that I don't want you to think I feel in any way aggrieved—that would be simply absurd—but more than that, I want to say that I think you behaved quite splendidly at Windlow—really splendidly! I hope you don't think it is impertinent for me to say that, but I want you to know how grateful I am to you—Jack told me what had happened—and I thought that if I said nothing, you might feel uncomfortable. Please don't feel anything of the kind—I only wish with all my heart that I could think I could behave as you did if I had been in your place, and I want to be friends."

"Yes indeed," said Howard, "I think it is awfully good of you to speak about it. You won't expect me," he added, smiling, "to say that I wish it had turned out otherwise; but I do hope you will be happy, with all my heart; and you will know that you will have a real welcome at Windlow if ever you care to come there."

The young man shook hands in silence with Howard, and went out with a smile. "Oh, I shall be all right," he said.

Jack sate up late with Howard and treated him to a long grumble.

"I do hope to goodness you will come back to Cambridge," he said. "You must simply make

Maud come. You must use your influence, your beautiful influence, of which we hear so much. Seriously, I do miss you here very much, and so does everybody else. Your pupils are in an awful stew. They say that you got them through the Trip without boring them, and that Crofts bores them and won't get them through. This place rather gets on my nerves now. The Dons don't confide in me, and I don't see things from their angle, as my father says. I think you somehow managed to keep them reasonable; they are narrow-minded men, I think."

"This is rather a shower of compliments," said Howard. "But I think I very likely shall come back. I don't think Maud would mind."

"Mind!" said Jack, "why you wind that girl round your little finger. She writes about you as if you were an archangel; and look here, I am sorry I took a gloomy view. It's all right; you were the right person. Freddy Guthrie would never have done for Maud—he's in a great way about it still, but I tell him he may be thankful to have escaped. Maud is a mountain-top kind of girl; she could never have got on without a lot of aspirations, she couldn't have settled down to the country-house kind of life. You are a sort of privilege, you know, and all that; Freddy Guthrie would never have been a privilege."

"That's rather a horror!" said Howard; "you

mustn't let these things out; you make me nervous!"

Jack laughed. "If your brother-in-law mayn't say this to you, I don't know who may. But seriously, really quite seriously, you are a bigger person than I thought. I'll tell you why. I had a kind of feeling that you ought not to let me speak to you as you do, that you ought to have snapped my head off. And then you seemed too much upset by what I said. I don't know if it was your tact; but you had your own way all the time, with me and with everybody; you seemed to give way at every point, and yet you carried out your programme. I thought you hadn't much backbone—there, the cat's out; and now I find that we were all dancing to your music. I like people to do that, and it amuses me to find that I danced as obediently as anyone, when I really thought I could make you do as I wished. I admire your way of going on: you make everyone think that you value their opinion, and yet you know exactly what you want and get it."

Howard laughed. "I really am not such a diplomatist as that, Jack! I am not a humbug; but I will tell you frankly what happens. What people say and think, and even how they look, does affect me very much at the time; but I have a theory that most people get what they really want. One has to be very careful what one wants in this

world, not because one is disappointed, but because Providence hands it one with a smile; and then it often turns out to be an ironical gift—a punishment in disguise."

"Maud shall hear that," said Jack; "a punishment in disguise—that will do her good, and take her down a peg or two. So you have found it out already?"

"My dear Jack," said Howard, "if you say anything of the kind, you will repent it. I am not going to have Maud bothered just now with any nonsense. Do you hear that? The frankness of your family is one of its greatest charms—but you don't quite know how much the frankness of babes and sucklings can hurt—and you are not to experiment on Maud."

Jack looked at Howard with a smile. "Here's the real man at last—the tyrant's vein! Of course, I obey. I didn't really mean it; and I like to hear you speak like that; it's rather fine."

Presently Jack said, "Now, about the Governor—rather a douche, I expect? But I see you can take care of yourself; he's hugely delighted—the intellectual temperature rises in every letter I get from him. But I want to make sure of one thing. I'm not going to stay on here much longer. I don't want a degree—it isn't the slightest use, plain or coloured. I want to get to work. If you come up again next term, I can stand it, not otherwise."

"Very well," said Howard, "that's a bargain. I must just talk things over with Maud. If we come up to Cambridge in October, you will stay till next June. If we don't, you shall be planted in the business. They will take you in, I believe, at any time, but would prefer you to finish your time here."

"Yes, that's it," said Jack, "but I want work: this is all right, in a way, but it's mostly piffle. How all these Johnnies can dangle on, I don't know; it's not my idea of life."

"Well, there's no hurry," said Howard, "but it shall be arranged as you wish."

XXXI

MAKING THE BEST OF IT

Howard became aware that with his colleagues he had suddenly become rather a person of importance. His "place" in the country was held in some dim way to increase the grandeur of the College. He found himself deferred to and congratulated. Mr. Redmayne was both caustic and affectionate.

"You look very well, I must say," he said. "You have a touch of the landed personage about you which becomes you. I should like you to come back here for our sakes, but I shan't press it. And how is Madam? I hope you have got rid of your first illusions? No? Well you must make haste and be reasonable. I am not learned in the vagaries of feminine temperament, but I imagine that the fair sex like to be dominated, and you will do that. You have a light hand on the reins—I always said that you rode the boys on the snaffle, but the curb is there! and in matrimony—well, well, I am an old bachelor of course, and I have a suspicion of all nooses. Never mind my nonsense, Kennedy—what I like about you, if I may say so, is that you have authority without pretensions. People will do as you wish, just to please you;

now I have always to be cracking the whip. These fellows here are very worthy men, but they are not men of the world! They are honest and sober—indeed one can hardly get one of them to join one in a glass of port—but they are limited, very limited. Now if only you could have kept clear of matrimony—no disrespect to Madam—what a comfortable time we might have had here! Man appoints and God disappoints—I suppose it is all for the best."

"Well," said Howard, "I think you will see me back here in October—my wife is quite ready to come, and there isn't really much for me to do at Windlow. I believe I am to be on the bench shortly; but if I live there in the vacations, that will be enough; and I don't feel that I have finished with Beaufort yet."

"Excellent!" said Mr. Redmayne. "I commend Madam's good sense and discretion. Pray give her my regards, and say that we shall welcome her at Cambridge. We will make the best of it—and I confess that in your place—well, if all women were like Madam, I could view marriage with comparative equanimity—though of course, I make the statement without prejudice."

XXXII

HOWARD'S PROFESSION

When Howard came back from Cambridge he had a long talk with Maud over the future; it seemed almost tacitly agreed that he should return to his work there, at all events for a time.

"I feel very selfish and pompous about all this," said Howard; "*my* work, *my* sphere—what nonsense it all is! Why should I come down to Windlow, take possession, and having picked the sweetest flower in the garden, stick it in my buttonhole and march away?"

Maud laughed and said, "Oh, no, it isn't that—it is quite a simple matter. You have learnt a trade, a difficult trade; why should you give it up? We don't happen to need the money, but that doesn't matter. My business is to take off your shoulders, if I can, all the trouble entailed on you by marrying me—it's simply a division of labour. You can't just settle down in the country as a small squire, with nothing much to do. People must do the work they can do, and I should be miserable if I thought I had pulled you out of your place in the world."

"I don't know," said Howard; "there seems to

me to be something rather stuffy about it: why can't we just live? Women do; there is no fuss made about their work, and their need to express themselves; yet they do it even more than men, and they do it without priggishness. My work at Cambridge is just what everyone else is doing, and if I don't do it, there will be half a dozen men capable of doing it and glad to do it. The great men of the world don't talk about the importance of their work: they just do whatever comes to hand—it's only the second-rate men who say that their talents haven't full scope. Do you remember poor Chambers, who was at lunch the other day? He told me that he had migrated from a town parish to a country parish, and that he missed the organisation so much. 'There seems nothing to organise down in the country!' he said. 'Now in my town parish there was the whole machine to keep going—I enjoyed that, and I don't feel I am giving effect to the best part of myself.' That seemed to me such a pompous line, and I felt that I didn't want to be like that. One's work! how little it matters! No one is indispensable—the disappearance of one man just gives another his chance."

"Yes, of course, it is rather hard to draw the line," said Maud, "and I think it is a pity to be solemn about it; but it seems to me so simple in this case. You can do the work—they want you

back—there is no reason why you should not go back."

"Perhaps it is mere laziness," said Howard, "but I feel as if I wanted a different sort of life now, a quieter life; and yet I know that there is a snare about that. I rather mistrust the people who say they must get time to think out things. It's like the old definition of metaphysics—the science of muddling oneself systematically. I don't think one can act by reason; one must act by instinct, and reason just prevents one's making a fool of oneself."

"I believe the time for the other life will come quite naturally later," said Maud. "At your age, you have got to do things. Of course it's the same with women in a way, but marriage is their obvious career, and the pity is that there don't seem enough husbands to go round. I can sit in my corner and placidly survey the overstocked market now!"

Howard got up and leaned against the chimney-piece, surveying his wife with delight. "Ah, child," he said, "I was lucky to come in when I did. I shiver at the thought that if I had arrived a little later there would have been 'no talk of thee and me' as Omar says. You would have been a devoted wife, and I should have been a hopeless bachelor!"

"It's unthinkable," said Maud, "it's horrible even to speculate about such things—a mere

question of proximity! Well, it can't be mended now; and the result is that I not only drive you back to work, but you have to carry me back as well, like Sindbad and the old man of the sea."

"Yes, it's just like that!" said Howard.

He made several attempts, with Mr. Sandys and with his aunt—even with Miss Merry—to get encouragement for his plan; but he could obtain no sympathy.

"I'm sick of the very word 'ideal,'" he said to Maud. "I feel like a waiter handing about tumblers on a tray, pressing people to have ideals—at least that is what I seem to be supposed to be doing. I haven't any ideals myself—the only thing I demand and practise is civility."

"Yes, I don't think you need bother about ideals," said Maud, "it's wonderful the depressing power of words; there are such a lot of fine and obvious things in the world, perfectly distinct, absolutely necessary, and yet the moment they become professional, they deprive one of all spirit and hope—Jane has that effect on me, I am afraid. I am sure she is a fine creature, but her view always makes me feel uncomfortable—now Cousin Anne takes all the things one needs for granted, and isn't above making fun of them; and then they suddenly appear wholesome and sensible. She is quite clear on the point; now if *she* wanted you to stay, it would be different."

"Very well, so be it!" said Howard; "I feel I am caught in feminine toils. I am like a child being taught to walk—every step applauded, handed on from embrace to embrace. I yield! I will take my beautiful mind back to Cambridge, I will go on moulding character, I will go on suggesting high motives. But the responsibility is yours, and if you turn me into a prig, it will not be my fault."

"Ah, I will take the responsibility for that," said Maud, "and, by the way, hadn't we better begin to look out for a house? I can't live in College, I believe, not even if I were to become a bedmaker?"

"Yes," said Howard, "a high-minded house of roughcast and tile, with plenty of white paint inside, Chippendale chairs, Watts engravings. I have come to that—it's inevitable, it just expresses the situation; but I mustn't go on like this—it isn't funny, this academic irony—it's dreadfully professional. I will be sensible, and write to an agent for a list. It had better just be 'a house' with nothing distinctive; because this will be our home, I hope, and that the official residence. And now, Maud, I won't be tiresome any more; we can't waste time in talking about these things. I haven't done with making love to you yet, and I doubt if I ever shall!"

XXXIII

ANXIETY

The months moved slowly on, a time full of deepening strain and anxiety to Howard. Maud herself seemed serene enough at first, full of hope; she began to be more dependent on him; and Howard perceived two things which gave him some solace; in the first place he found that, sharp as the tension of anxiety in his mind often was, he did not realise it as a burden of which he would be merely glad to be rid. He had an instinctive dislike of all painful straining things—of responsibilities, disagreeable duties, things that disturbed his tranquillity; but this anxiety did not come to him in that light at all; he longed that it should be over, but it was not a thing which he desired to banish from his mind; it was all bound up with love and happy anticipation; and next he learned the joy of doing things that would otherwise be troublesome for the sake of love, and found them all transmuted, not into seemly courtesies, but into sharp and urgent pleasures. To be of use to Maud, to entertain her, to disguise his anxieties, to compel himself to talk easily and lightly—all this filled his soul with delight, especially when he found as the months went on

that Maud began to look to him as a matter of course; and though Howard had been used to say that being read aloud to was the only occupation in the world that was worse than reading aloud, he found that there was no greater pleasure than in reading to Maud day by day, in finding books that she cared for.

"If only I could spare you some of this," he said to her one day, "that's the awful thing, not to be able to share the pain of anyone whom one loves. I feel I could hold my hand in the fire with a smile, if only I knew that it was saving you something!"

"Ah, dearest, I know," said Maud, "but you mustn't think of it like that; it *interests* me in a curious way—I can't explain—I don't feel helpless; I feel as if I were doing something worth the trouble!"

At last the time drew near; it was hot, silent, airless weather; the sun lay fiercely in the little valley, day by day; one morning they were sitting together and Maud suddenly said to him, "Dearest, one thing I want to say; if I seem to be afraid, I am *not* afraid: will you remember that? I want to walk every step of the way; I mean to do it, I wish to do it; I am not afraid in my heart of hearts of anything—pain, or even worse; and you must remember that, even if I do not seem to remember!"

"Yes," said Howard, "I will remember that; and indeed I know it; you even take away my own fears when you speak so; love takes hands beneath it all."

But on the following morning—Maud had a restless and suffering night—Mrs. Graves came in upon Howard as he tried to read, to tell him that there was great anxiety, Maud had had a sudden attack of pain; it had passed off, but they were not reassured. "The doctor will be here presently," she said. Howard rose dry-lipped and haggard. "She sends you her dearest love," she said, "but she would rather be alone; she doesn't wish you to see her thus; she is absolutely brave, and that is the best thing; and I am not afraid myself," she added: "we must just wait—everything is in her favour; but I know how you feel and how you must feel; just clasp the anxiety close, look in its face; it's a blessed thing, though you can't see it as I do—blessed, I mean, that one *can* feel so."

But the fear thickened after this. A carriage drew up, and Howard saw two doctors descend, carrying bags in their hands. His heart sickened within him, yet he was helped by seeing their unembarrassed and cheerful air, the nod that one of them, a big, fresh-faced man, gave to the coachman, the look he cast round the beautiful old house. People could think of such things, Howard saw, in a moment like that. He went down and met them

in the hall, and had that strange sense of unreality in moments of crisis, when one hears one's own voice saying courteous things, without any volition of one's own. The big doctor looked at him kindly. "It is all quite simple and straightforward!" he said. "You must not let yourself be anxious; these times pass by and one wonders afterwards how one could have been so much afraid."

But the hours brought no relief; the doctors stayed long in the house; something had occurred, Howard knew not what, did not dare to conjecture. The silence, the beauty of the whole scene, was insupportably horrible to him. He walked up and down in the afternoon, gazing at Maud's windows —once a nurse came to the window and opened it a little. He went back at last into the house; the doctors were there, talking in low tones to Mrs. Graves. "I will be back first thing in the morning," said one; the worst, then, had not happened. But as he appeared a look of inquiry passed between them and Mrs. Graves. She beckoned to him.

"She is very ill," she said; "it is over, and she has survived; but the child is dead."

Howard stood blankly staring at the group. "I don't understand," he said; "the child is dead— yes, but what about Maud?"

The doctor came up to him. "It was sudden," he said; "she had an attack—we had anticipated it—the child was born dead; but there is every

reason to believe that she will recover ; it has been a great shock, but she is young and strong, and she is full of pluck—you need not be anxious at present ; there is no imminent danger." Then he added, " Mr. Kennedy, get some rest yourself ; she may need you, and you must not be useless : I tell you, the first danger is over and will not recur ; you must just force yourself to eat—try to sleep."

" Sleep ? " said Howard with a wan smile, " yes, if you could tell me how to do that ! "

The doctors departed ; Howard went off with Mrs. Graves. She made him sit down, she told him a few details ; then she said, " Dearest boy, it's no use wasting words or pity just now—you know what I feel ; I would tell you plainly if I feared the worst. I do *not* fear it, and now let me exercise my art on you, for I am sure I can help you a little. One must not play with these things, but this is in earnest."

She came and sate down beside him, and stroked his hair, his brow ; she said, " Just try, if you can, to cast everything out of your mind ; relax your limbs, be entirely passive ; and don't listen to what I say—just let your mind float free." Presently she began to speak in a low voice to him ; he hardly heeded what she said, for a strange drowsiness settled down upon him like the in-flowing of some oblivious tide, and he knew no more.

A couple of hours later he awoke from a deep

sleep, with a sense of sweet visions and experiences—he looked round. Mrs. Graves sate beside him smiling, but the horror suddenly darted back into his mind with a spasm of fear, as if he had been bitten by a poisonous serpent.

"What has been happening?" he said.

"Ah," said Mrs. Graves quietly, "you have been asleep. I have some power in these things, which I don't use except in times of need—some day I will tell you more; I found it out by accident, but I have used it both for myself and others. It's just a natural force, of which many people are suspicious, because it doesn't seem normal; but don't be afraid, dear boy—all goes well; she is sleeping quietly, and she knows what has happened."

"Thank you," said Howard; "yes, I am better; but I could almost wish I had not slept—I feel the pain of it more. I don't feel just now as if anything in the world could make up for this—as if anything could make it seem just to endure such misery. What has one done to deserve it?"

"What indeed?" said Mrs. Graves, "because the time will come when you will ask that in a different sense. Don't you see, dear boy, that even this is life's fulness? One mustn't be afraid of suffering—what one must be afraid of is *not* suffering; it's the measure of love—you would not part with your love if that would free you from suffering?"

"No," said Howard slowly, "I would not—you are right. I can see that. One brings the other; but I cannot see the need of it."

"That is only because one does not realise how much lies ahead," said Mrs. Graves. "Be content that you know at least how much you love—there's no knowledge like that!"

XXXIV

THE DREAM-CHILD

For some days Howard was in an intolerable agony of mind about Maud; she lay in a sort of stupor of weakness and weariness, recognising no one, hardly speaking, just alive, indifferent to everything. They could not let him be with her, they would allow no one to speak to her. The shock had been too great, and the frail life seemed flickering to its close: once or twice he was just allowed to see her; she lay like a tired child, her head on her hand, lost in incommunicable dreams. Howard dared not leave the house, and the tension of his nerves became so acute that the least thing—a servant entering the room, or anyone coming out to speak with him as he paced up and down the garden—caused him an insupportable horror; had they come to summon him to see the end? The frightful thing was the silence, the blank silence of the one he loved best. If she had moaned or wept or complained, he could have borne it better; but she seemed entirely withdrawn from him. Even when a little strength returned, they feared for her reason. She seemed unaware of where she was, of what had happened, of all about her. The

night was the worst time of all. Howard, utterly wearied out, would go to bed, and sink into sleep, sleep so profound that it seemed like descending into some deep and oblivious tide; then a current of misery would mingle with his dreams, a sense of unutterable depression; and then he would suddenly wake in the grip of fear, formless and bodiless fear. The smallest sound in the house, the creaking of a door, a footfall, would set his heart beating with fierce hammer strokes. He would light his candles, wander restlessly about, gaze out from his window into the blackness of the garden, where the trees outlined themselves against the dark sky, pierced with stars; or he would try to read, but wholly in vain. No thought, no imagination seemed to have any meaning for him, in the presence of that raging dread. Had he, he wondered, come in sight of the ultimate truth of life? The pain he suffered seemed to him the strongest thing in the world, stronger than love, stronger than death. The thick tides of the night swept past him thus, till the light began to outline the window crannies; and then there was a new day to face, with failing brain and shattered strength.

The only comfort he received was in the presence of his aunt. She alone seemed strong, almost serene, till he wondered if she was not hard. She did not encourage him to speak of his fears: she talked quietly about ordinary things, not demand-

ing an answer ; she saw the doctors, whom Howard could not bear to see, and told him their report. The fear changed its character as the days went on ; Maud would live, they thought ; but to what extent she would regain her strength they could not say, while her mental powers seemed in abeyance.

Mr. Sandys often looked in, but he seemed at first helpless in Howard's presence. Howard used to bestir himself to talk to him, with a sickening sense of unreality. Mr. Sandys took a very optimistic view of Maud's case ; he assured Howard that he had seen the same thing a dozen times ; she had great reserves of strength, he believed ; it was but nature insisting upon rest and quiet. His talk became a sort of relief to Howard, because he refused to admit any possibility of ultimate disaster. No tragedy could keep Mr. Sandys silent ; and Howard began to be aware that the Vicar must have thought out a series of topics to talk to him about, and even prepared the line of conversation beforehand. Jack had been sent for at the crisis, but when the imminent danger lessened, Howard suggested that he should go back to Cambridge, in which Jack gratefully acquiesced.

One day Mrs. Graves came suddenly in upon Howard, as he sate drearily trying to write some letters, and said, " There is a great improvement this morning. I went in to see her, and she has come back to herself ; she mentioned your name,

and the doctor says you can see her for a few minutes; she must not talk, but she is herself. You may just come and sit by her for a few minutes; it will be best to come at once."

Howard got up, and was seized by a sudden giddiness. He grasped his chair, and was aware that Mrs. Graves was looking at him anxiously.

"Can you manage it, dear boy?" she said. "You have had a great strain."

"Manage it?" said Howard, "why, it's new life. I shall be all right in a moment. Does she know what has happened?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Graves, "she knows all—it is you she is anxious about—she isn't thinking of herself at all."

Howard followed his aunt out of the room, feeling suddenly alert and strong. They entered the room; as they did so, Maud turned and looked at him—the faintest tinge of colour had returned to her face; she held out her hands to him, and let them fall again. Howard stepped quickly to the side of the bed, dropped on his knees, and took his wife in his arms. She nestled close to him for a moment, and then looked at him with a smile—then speaking in a very low voice, almost a whisper, she said:

"Yes, I know—you will help me, dearest; yes, I have come back to you—I have been wandering far away, with the child—you know—he wanted

me, I think; but I have left him somewhere, safe, and I am sent back—I didn't think I could come back, but I had to choose; I have chosen . . ." her voice died away, and she looked long and anxiously at him. "You are not well," she said; "it is my fault."

"Ah, you must not talk, darling," said Howard; "we will talk later on; just let me be sure that you won't leave me—that is enough, that's all I want, just we two together again, and the dear child, ours for ever."

"The dear child," said Maud, "that is right—he is ours, beloved. I will tell you about him."

"Not now," said Howard, "not now."

Maud gave him a nod, in her old way, just the ghost of a nod; and then just put her face beside his own, and lay in silence, till he was called away. Then she kissed his hand as he bent over her, and said, "Don't be afraid, dearest—I am coming back—it is like a great staircase, with light at the top. I went just to the edge—it's full of sweet sound there, and now I am coming down again. Those are my dreams," she added; "I am not out of my dreams yet."

Howard went out, waving his hand; he found Mrs. Graves beside him.

"Yes," she said, "I have no more fear."

Howard was suddenly seized with faintness, uncontrollable dizziness. Mrs. Graves took him to the

library, and made him sit down, but his weakness continued in spite of himself.

"I really am ashamed of myself," he said, "for this dreadful exhibition."

"Exhibition!" said Mrs. Graves, "it's the best thing that can happen. I must tell you that I have been even more anxious about you than Maud, because you either couldn't or wouldn't break down —those are the people who are in danger at a time like this! Why the sight of you has half killed me, dear boy! If you had ever said you were miserable, or been rude or irritable, or forgotten yourself for a moment, I should have been happier. It's very chivalrous and considerate, of course; though you will say that you didn't think of that; but it's hardly human—and now at last I see you are flesh and blood again."

"Well, I am not sure that it isn't what I thought about you," said Howard.

"Ah," said Mrs. Graves, "I am an old woman; and I don't think death is so terrible to me. Life is interesting enough, but I should often be glad to get away; there is something beyond that is a good deal easier and more beautiful. But I don't expect *you* to feel that."

"You think she will get well?" said Howard faintly.

"Yes, she will get well, and soon," said Mrs. Graves. "She has been resting in her own natural

way. The poor dearest baby—you don't know, you can't know, what that means to Maud and even to me; you will have to be very good to her for a long time yet; you won't understand her sorrow—she won't expect you to; but you mustn't fail her; and you must do as you are bid. This afternoon you must just go out for a walk, and you must *sleep*, dear; that's what you want; you don't know what a spectre you are; and you must just get well as quick as you can, for Maud's sake and mine."

That afternoon there fell on Howard after his walk—though the world was sweet to him and dear again, he was amazed to find how weak he was—an unutterable drowsiness against which he could hardly fight. The delicious weariness came on him like a summer air; he stumbled to bed that night, and oh, the wonder of waking in a new world, the incredible happiness that greeted him, happiness that merged again in a strange and serene torpor of the senses, every sight and sound striking sharp and beautiful on his eye and ear.

For some days he was only allowed to see Maud for little lengthening periods; they said little, but just sate in silence with a few whispered words. Maud recovered fast, and was each day a little stronger.

One evening, as he sate with her, she said, "I want to tell you now what has been happening to me, dearest. You must hear it all. You must not

grieve yourself about the little child, because you cannot have known it as I did—but you must let me grieve a little . . . you will see when I tell you. I won't go back too far. There was all the pain first—I hope I did not behave very badly, but I was beside myself with pain, and then I went off . . . you know . . . I don't remember anything of that . . . and then I came back again, feeling that something very strange had happened to me, and I was full of joy; and then I saw that something was wrong, and it came over me what had happened. The strange thing is that though I was so weak—I could hardly think and I could not speak—yet I never felt more clear or strong in mind—no, not in mind either, but in myself. It seems so strange that I have never even *seen* our child, not with my eyes, though that matters little. But then when I understood, I did indeed fail utterly; you seemed to me so far away; I felt somehow that you were thinking only about me, and I could simply think of nothing but the child—my own child, gone from me in a moment. I simply prayed with all my soul to die and have done with everything, and then there was a strange whirl in the air like a great wind, and loud confused noises, and I fell away out of life, and thought it was death. And then I awoke again, but it was not here—it was in a strange wide place—a sort of twilight, and there were hills and trees. I stood up, and suddenly felt a hand

in my own, and there was a little child beside me, looking up at me. I can't tell you what happened next —it is rather dim to me, but I sate, or walked, or wandered, carrying the child—and it *talked* to me; yes, it talked in a little clear voice, though I can't remember anything it said; but I felt somehow as if it was telling me what might have been, and that I was getting to *know* it somehow—does that seem strange? It seems like months and years that I was with it; and I feel now that I not only love it, but know it, all its thoughts, all its desires, all its faults—it had *faults*, dearest; think of that—faults such as I have, and other faults as well. It was not quite content, but it was not unhappy; but it wasn't a dream-child at all, not like a little angel, but a perfectly real child. It laughed sometimes, and I can hear its little laughter now; it found fault with me, it wanted to go on—it cried sometimes, and nothing would please it; but it loved me and wanted to be with me; and I told it about you, and it not only listened, but asked me many times over to tell it more, about you, about me, about this place—I think it had other things in its mind, recollections, I thought, which it tried to tell me; so it went on. Once or twice I found myself here in bed—but I thought I was dying, and only wanted to lose myself and get back to the child—and then it all came to an end. There was a great staircase up which we went together;

there was cloud at the top, but it seemed to me that there was life and movement behind it; there was no shadow behind the cloud, but light . . . and there was sound, musical sound. I went up with the child's hand clasped close in my own, but at the top he disengaged himself, and went in without a word to me or a sign, not as if he were leaving me, but as if his real life, and mine too, were within —just as a child would run into its home, if you came back with it from a walk, and as if it knew you were following, and there was no need of good-byes. I did not feel any sorrow at all then, either for the child or myself—I simply turned round and came down . . . and then I was back in my room again . . . and then it was you that I wanted."

"That's all very wonderful," said Howard, musing, "wonderful and beautiful. . . . I wish I had seen that!"

"Yes, but you didn't need it," said Maud; "one sees what one needs, I think. And I want to add something, dearest, which you must believe. I don't want to revert to this, or to speak of it again —I don't mean to dwell upon it; it is just enough for me. One mustn't press these things too closely, nor want other people to share them or believe them. That is the mistake one makes, that one thinks that other people ought to find one's own feelings and fancies and experiences as real as one finds them oneself. I don't even want to know

what you think about it—I don't want you to say you believe in it, or to think about it at all. I couldn't help telling you about it, because it seems as real to me as anything that ever happened in my life; but I don't want you to have to pretend, or to accept it in order to please me. It is just my own experience; I was ill, unconscious, delirious, anything you please; but it is just a blessed fact for me, for all that, a gift from God. Do you really trust me when I say this, dearest? I don't claim a word from you about it, but it will make all the difference to me. I can go on now. I don't want to die, I don't want to follow—I only want you to feel, or to learn to feel, that the child is a real child, our very own, as much a part of our family as Jack or Cousin Anne; and I don't even want you to *say* that. I want all to be as before; the only difference is that I now don't feel as if I was *choosing*. It isn't a case of leaving him or leaving you. I have you both—and I think you wanted me most; and I haven't a wish or a desire in my heart but to be with you."

"Yes, dearest," said Howard, "I understand. It is perfect to be trusted so. I won't say anything now about it. I could not say anything But you have put something into my heart which will spring up and blossom. Just now there isn't room for anything in my mind but the fact that you are given back to me; that's all I can hold;

but it won't be all. I am glad you told me this, and utterly thankful that it is so. That you should be here, given back to me, that must be enough now. I can't count up my gains; but if you had come back, leaving your heart elsewhere, how could I have borne that?"

XXXV

THE POWER OF LOVE

It was a few days later that Howard found himself sitting alone one evening after dinner, with his aunt.

"There is something that I want to talk to you about," he said. "No doubt Maud has told you all about her strange experience? She has described it to me, and I don't know what to say or think. She was wonderfully fine about it. She said she would not mention it again, and she did not desire me to talk about it—or even believe it! And I don't know what to do. It isn't the sort of thing that I believe in, though I think it beautiful, just because it was Maud who felt it. But I can't say what I really believe about it, without seeming unsympathetic and even rough; and yet I don't like there being anything which means so much to her, which doesn't mean much to me."

"Yes," said Mrs. Graves, "I foresaw that difficulty, but I think Maud did right to tell you."

"Of course, of course," said Howard, "but I mean much more than that. Is there something really *there*, open to all, possible to all, from which I am shut out by what the Bible calls my hardness

of heart? Do you really think yourself that a living spirit drew near and made itself known to Maud thus? or is it a beautiful dream, a sort of subjective attempt at finding comfort, an instinctive effort of the mind towards saving itself from sorrow?"

"Ah," said Mrs. Graves, "who shall say? Of course I do not see any real objection to the former, when I think of all the love and the emotion that went to the calling of the little spirit from the deeps of life; but then I am a woman, and an old woman. If I were a man of your age who had lived an intellectual life, I should feel very much as you do."

"But if you believe it," said Howard, "can you give me reasons why you believe it? I am not unreasonable at all. I hate the attitude of mind of denying the truth of the experience of others, just because one has not felt it oneself. Here, it seems to me, there are two explanations, and my scepticism inclines to what is, I suppose, the materialistic one. I am very suspicious of experiences which one is told to take on trust, and which can't be intellectually expressed. It's the sort of theory that the clergy fall back upon, what they call spiritual truth, which seems to me merely unchecked, unverifiable experience. I don't, to take a crude instance, believe in statues that wink; and yet the tendency of the priest is to say that it is

a matter of childlike faith; yet to me credulity appears to be one of the worst of sins. It is incredulity which has disposed of superstition."

"Yes," said Mrs. Graves. "I fully agree with you about that; and there is a great deal of very objectionable nonsense which goes by the name of mysticism, which is merely emotion divorced from commonsense."

"Yes," said Howard, "and if I may speak quite frankly, I do very much respect your own judgment and your convictions. It seems to me that you have a very sceptical turn of mind, which has acted as a solvent upon a whole host of stupid and conventional beliefs. I don't think you take things for granted, and it always seems to me that you have got rid of a great many foolish traditions which ordinary people accept—and it's a fine attitude."

"I'm not too old to be insensible to a compliment," said Mrs. Graves, smiling. "What you are surprised at is to find that I have any beliefs left, I suppose? And I expect you are inclined to think that I have done the feminine thing ultimately, and compromised, so as to retain just the comfortable part of the affair."

"No," said Howard, "I don't. I am much more inclined to think that there is something which is hidden from me; and I want you to explain it, if you can and will."

"Well, I will try," said Mrs. Graves. "Let me think." She sate silent for a little, and then she said: "I think that as I get older, I recognise more and more the division between the rational part of the mind and the instinctive part of the mind. I find more and more that my deepest convictions are not rational—at least not arrived at by reason—only formulated by it. I think that reason ought to be able to formulate convictions; but they are there, whether expressed or not. Most women don't bring the reason to bear at all, and the result is that they hold a mass of beliefs, some simply inherited, some mere phrases which they don't understand, and some real convictions. A great deal of the muddle comes from the feminine weariness of logic, and a great deal, too, from the fact that they never learn how to use words—words are the things that divide people! But I believe more and more, by experience, in the *soul*. I do not believe that the soul begins with birth or ends with death. Now I have no sort of doubt in my own mind that the soul of your child was a living thing, a spirit which has lived before, and will live again. Souls, I believe, come to the brink of life, out of some unknown place, and by choice or impelled by some need for experience, take shape. I don't know how or why this is—I only believe that it is so. If your child had lived, you would have become aware of its soul; you would have found

it to have perfectly distinct qualities and desires and views of its own, not learnt from you, and which you could not affect or change. All those qualities are in it from the time of birth—but it takes a soul some time to learn the use of the body. But the connection between the soul and the father and mother who give it a body is a real one; I don't profess to know what it is, or why it is that some parents have congenial children and some quite uncongenial ones—that is only one of the many mysteries which beset us. Holding all this, it does not seem to me on the face of it impossible that the soul of the child should have been brought into contact with Maud's soul; though of course the whole affair is quite capable of a scientific and material explanation. But I have seen too many strange things in my life to make me accept the scientific explanation as conclusive. I have known men and women who, after a bereavement, have had an intense consciousness of the presence of the beloved spirit with them and near them. I have experienced it myself; and it seems to me as impossible to explain as a sense of beauty. If one feels a particular thing to be beautiful, one can't give good reasons for one's emotion to a person who does not think the same thing beautiful; but it appears to me that the duty of explaining it away lies on the one who does *not* feel it. One can't say that beauty is a purely subjective

thing, because when two people think a thing beautiful, they understand each other perfectly. Do I make myself clear at all, or is that merely a bit of feminine logic ? "

" No, indeed," said Howard slowly, " I think it is a good case. The very last thing I would do is to claim to be fully equipped for the understanding of all mysteries. My difficulty is that while there are two explanations of a thing—a transcendental one and a material one—I hanker after the material one. But it isn't because I want to disbelieve the transcendental one. It is because I want to believe it so much, that I feel that I must exclude all possibility of its being anything else."

" Yes," said Mrs. Graves, " and I think you are perfectly right ; one must follow one's conscience in this. I don't want you to swallow it whole at all. I want you, and I am sure that Maud wants you, just to wait and see. Don't begin by denying the possibility of its being a transcendental thing. Just hold the facts in your mind, and as life goes on, see if your experience confirms it, and until it does, do not pretend that it does. I don't claim to be omniscient. Something quite definite, of course, lies behind the mystery of life, and whatever it is, is not affected by what you or I believe about it. I may be wholly and entirely mistaken, and it may be that life is only a chemical phenomenon ; but I have kept my eyes open, and my heart open ;

and I am as sure as I can be that there is something very much bigger behind it than that. I myself believe that each being is an immortal spirit, hampered by contact with mortal laws, and I believe that consciousness and emotion are something superior even to chemistry. But to use emotion to silence people would be entirely repugnant to me, and equally to Maud. She isn't the sort of woman who would be content if you only just said you believed her. She would hate that!"

"Well," said Howard, smiling, "you are two very wonderful women, and that's the truth. I am not surprised at *your* wisdom—it *is* wisdom—because you have lived very bravely and loved many people; but it's amazing to me to find such courage and understanding in a girl. Of course you have helped her—but I don't think you could have produced such thoughts in her unless they had been there to start with."

"That's exactly what I have tried to say," said Mrs. Graves. "Where did Maud's fine mixture of feeling and commonsense come from? Her mother was a woman of some perception, but after all she married Frank, and Frank with all his virtue isn't a very mature spirit!"

"Ah," said Howard, "my marriage has done everything for me! What a blind, complacent, petty ass I was—and am too, though I at least perceive it! I see myself as an elderly donkey,

braying and capering about in a paddock—and someone leans over the fence, and all is changed. I ought not to think lightly of mysteries, when all this astonishing conspiracy has taken place round me, to give me a home and a wife and a whole range of new emotions—how Maud came to care for me is still the deepest wonder of all—a loveless prig like me!"

"I won't be understood to subscribe to all that," said Mrs. Graves, laughing, "though I see your point of view; but there's something deeper even than that, dear Howard. You care for me, you care for Maud; but it's the power of caring that matters more than the power of caring for particular people. Does that seem a very hard saying? You see I do not believe—what do you say to this—in memory lasting. You and I love each other here and now; when I die, I do not feel sure that I shall have any recollection of you or Maud or my own dear husband—how horrible that would sound to many men and nearly all women—but I have learned how to love, and you have learned how to love, and we shall find other souls to draw near to as the ages go on; and so I look forward to death calmly enough, because whatever I am I shall have souls to love, and I shall find souls to love me."

"No," said Howard, "I can't believe that! I can't believe in any life here or hereafter apart from

Maud. It is strange that I should be the sentimentalist now, and you the stern sceptic. The thought to me is infinitely dreary—even atrocious."

"I am not surprised," said Mrs. Graves, "but that's the last sacrifice. That is what losing oneself means; to believe in love itself, and not in the particular souls we love; to believe in beauty, not in beautiful things. I have learned that! I do not say it in any complacency or superiority—you must believe me; but it is the last and hardest thing that I have learned. I do not say that it does not hurt—one suffers terribly in losing one's dear self, in parting from other selves that are even more dear. But would one send away the souls one loves best into a loveless paradise? Can one bear to think of them as hankering for oneself, and lost in regret? No, not for a moment! They pass on to new life and love; we cannot ourselves always do it in this life—the flesh is weak and dear; and age passes over us, and takes away the close embrace and the sweet desire. But it is the awakening of the soul to love that matters; and it has been to me one of the sweetest experiences of my life to see you and Maud awaken to love. But you will not stay there—nothing is ultimate, not the dearest and largest relations of life. One climbs from selfishness to liking, and from liking to passion, and from passion to love itself."

"No," said Howard, "I cannot rise to that yet.

I see, I dimly feel, that you are far above me in this ; but I cannot let Maud go. She is mine, and I am hers."

Mrs. Graves smiled and said, "Well, we will leave it at that. Kiss me, dearest boy ; I don't love you less because I feel as I do—perhaps even more, indeed ! "

XXXVI

THE TRUTH

It was a sunny day of winter with a sharp breeze blowing, just after the birth of the New Year, that Howard and Maud left Windlow for Cambridge. The weeks previous had been much clouded for Howard by doubts and anxieties and a multiplicity of small business. Furnishing even an official house for a life of graceful simplicity involved intolerable lists, bills, letters, catalogues of things which it seemed inconceivable that anyone should need. The very number and variety of brushes required seemed to Howard an outrage on the love of cheap beauty, so epigrammatically praised by Thucydides; he said with a groan to Maud that it was indeed true that the Nineteenth Century would stand out to all time as the period of the world's history in which more useless things had been made than at any epoch before!

But this morning, for some blessed reason, all his vexations seemed to slip off from him. They were to start in the afternoon; but at about eleven Maud in cloak and furred stole stepped into the library and demanded a little walk. Howard looked approvingly, admiringly, adoringly at his wife. She

had regained a look of health and lightness more marked than he had ever before seen in her. Her illness had proved a rest, in spite of all the trouble she had passed through. Some new beauty, the beauty of experience, had passed into her face without making havoc of the youthful contours and the girlish freshness, and the beautiful line of her cheek outlined upon the dark fur, with the wide-open eye above it, came upon Howard with an almost tormenting sense of loveliness, like a chord of far-off music. He flung down his pen, and took his wife in his arms for an instant. "Yes," he said in answer to her look, "it's all right, darling—I can manage anything with you near me, looking like that—that's all I want!"

They went out into the garden with its frost-crisped grass and leafless shrubberies, with the high-standing down behind. "How it blows!" said Howard:

> "'Twould blow like this through holt and hanger
> When Uricon the city stood:
> 'Tis the old wind, in the old anger,
> But then it threshed another wood!'

How beautiful that is—'the old wind, in the old anger!'—but it isn't true, for all that. If one thing changes, everything changes; and the wind has got to march on, like you and me: there's nothing pathetic about it. The weak thing is to want to stay as we are!"

"Oh yes," said Maud; "one wastes pity. I was inclined myself to be pathetic about it all yesterday, when I went up home and looked into my little old room. The furniture and books and pictures seemed to me to reproach me with having deserted them; but, oh dear, what a fantastic, foolish, anxious little wretch I was, with all my plans for uplifting everyone! You don't know, dearest, you can't know, out of what a stagnant little pool you fished me up!"

"And yet *I* feel," said Howard, "as if it was you who had saved me from a sort of death—what a charming picture! two people who can't swim saving each other from drowning."

"Well, that's the way that things are done!" said Maud decisively.

They left the garden, and betook themselves to the pool; the waters welled up, green and cold, from the depth, and hurried away down their bare channel.

"This is the scene of my life," said Howard; "I *will* be sentimental about this! This is where my ghost will walk, if anywhere; good heavens, to think that it was not three years ago that I came here first, and thought in a solemn way that it was going to have a strange significance for me. 'Significance,' that is the mischief! But it is all very well, now that every minute is full of happiness, to laugh at the old fears—they were very real at the

time,—'the old wind, in the old anger'—one can't sit and dream, though it's pleasant, it's pleasant."

"It was the only time in my life," said Maud, "when I was ever brave! Why isn't one braver? It is agreeable at the time, and it is almost overpaid!"

"It is like what a doctor told me once," said Howard, "that he had never in his life seen a patient go to the operating table other than calm and brave. Face to face with things one is all right; and yet one never learns not to waste time in dreading them."

They went on in silence up the valley, Maud walking beside him with all her old lightness. Howard thought he had never seen anything more beautiful. They were out of the wind now, but could hear it hiss in the grasses above them.

"What about Cambridge?" said Maud. "I think it will be rather fun. I haven't wanted to go; but do you know, if someone came to me and said I might just unpack everything, I should be dreadfully disappointed!"

"I believe I should be too," said Howard. "My only fear is that I shall not be interested—I shall be always wanting to get back to you—and yet how inexplicable that used to seem to me, that Dons who married should really prefer to steal back home, instead of living the free and joyous life of the sympathetic and bachelor; and even now it

seems difficult to suppose that other men can feel as I do about *their* wives."

"Like the boy in *Punch*," said Maud, "who couldn't believe that the two earwigs could care about each other."

A faint music of bells came to them on the wind. "Hark!" said Howard; "the Sherborne chime! Do you remember when we first heard that? It gave me a delightful sense of other people being busy when I was unoccupied. To-day it seems as if it was warning me that I have got to be busy."

They turned at last and retraced their steps. Presently Howard said, "There's just one more thing, child, I want to say. I haven't ever spoken to you since about the vision—whatever it was—which you described to me—the child and you. But I took you at your word!"

"Yes," said Maud, "I have always been glad that you did that!"

"But I have wanted to speak," said Howard, "simply because I did not want you to think that it wasn't in my mind—that I had cast it all lightly away. I haven't tried to force myself into any belief about it—it's a mystery—but it has grown into my mind somehow, and become real; and I do feel more and more that there is something very true and great about it, linking us with a life beyond. It does seem to me life, and not silence; love, and not emptiness. It has not come in between us, as

I feared it might—or rather it *has* come in between us, and seems to be holding both our hands. I don't say that my reason tells me this—but something has outrun my reason, and something stronger and better than reason. It is near and dear : and, dearest, you will believe me when I say that this isn't said to please you or to woo you—I wouldn't do that ! I am not in sight of the reality yet, as you have been ; but it *is* a reality, and not a sweet dream."

Maud looked at him, her eyes brimming with sudden tears. " Ah, my beloved," she said, " that is all and more than I had hoped. Let it just stay there ! I am not foolish about it, and indeed the further away that it gets, the less I am sure what happened. I shall not want you to speak of it : it isn't that it is too sacred—nothing is too sacred —but it is just a fact I can't reckon with, like the fact of one's own birth and death. All I just hoped was that you might not think it only a girl's fancy ; but indeed I should not have cared if you *had* thought that. The *truth*—that is what matters ; and nothing that you or I or anyone, in any passion of love or sorrow, can believe about the truth, can alter it ; the only thing is to try to see it all clearly, not to give false reasons, not to let one's imagination go."

" Yes, yes," said Howard, " that's the secret of love and life and everything ; and yet it seems a

hard thing to believe; because if it were not for your illusions about me, for instance—if you could really see me as I am—you couldn't feel as you do; one comes back to trusting one's heart after all—that is the only power we have of reading the writing on the wall. And yet that is not all; it *is* possible to read it, to spell it out; but it is the interpretation that one needs, and for that one must trust love, and love only."

They went back to the house in a happy silence; but Maud slipped out again, and went to the little churchyard. There behind the chancel, in a corner of the buttress, was a little mound. Maud laid a single white flower upon it. "No," she said softly, as if speaking in the ear of a child, "no, my darling, I am not making any mistake. I don't think of you as sleeping here, though I love the place where the little limbs are laid. You are awake, alive, about your business, I don't doubt. I'd have loved you, guarded you, helped you along; but you have made love live for me, and that, and hope, are enough now for us both! I don't claim you, sweet; I don't even ask you to remember and understand."

Printed by Ballantyne, Hanson & Co.
at Paul's Work, Edinburgh

Biography and Reminiscence

With a Portrait. 2nd Impression. Demy 8vo. 10s. 6d. net.

Jane Austen: Her Life and Letters. A Family Record.

By William Austen-Leigh (Fellow of King's College, Cambridge) and Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh.

Sunday Times.—'A model biography in its way, and as the work of relatives may claim to be authoritative and exhaustive.'

Liverpool Daily Post.—'Apart from the interest of its subject, it has much to commend it. A thoroughly interesting and most informative biography.'

With 2 Portraits and 2 Plans. Large post 8vo. 10s. 6d. net.

'J.' A Memoir of John Willis Clark,

Registrary of Cambridge University, and sometime Fellow of Trinity College.

By Dr. A. E. Shipley, F.R.S.

Master of Christ's College, Cambridge.

In the Cambridge Review, The Provost of King's says:—'A book of permanent value to Cambridge men and of vivid immediate interest to the generations who knew 'J.' Dr. Shipley has told his story with a combination of true appreciation and perceptive humour.'

Country Life.—'Everybody with a direct or indirect connection with Cambridge University will read this modest biography with absorbing interest. Mr. Shipley is to be congratulated on having produced so worthy a memorial of his friend.'

With Portrait. 2nd Impression. Large crown 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.

Recollections and Impressions of the Rev. John Smith, M.A.

For twenty-five years Assistant-Master at Harrow School.

By Edward D. Rendall & The Rev. Gerald H. Rendall, Litt. D.

Late Headmaster of Charterhouse.

Manchester Courier.—'One need not be an old Harrovian to catch something of the magic spell of such a man as John Smith. Both authors bear witness to his humanity, his generosity, his unaffected humility.'

Large post 8vo. 6s. net.

The Adventures of a Newspaper Man.

By Frank Dilnot.

Author of 'The Old Order Changeth.'

Daily Citizen.—'Mr. Dilnot has the seeing eye and the understanding heart, and withal a happy knack of description that renders all his "adventures" intensely interesting.'

Daily Mirror.—'An excellent piece of journalism, he plunges at once into the middle of things. There are no dates and no dulness in him.'

London: Smith, Elder & Co., 15 Waterloo Place, S.W.

History and Politics

With a Portrait of Captain Cook. Crown 8vo. 6s.

The New World of the South : Australia in the Making.

By W. H. Fitchett, B.A., LL.D. Author of 'Fights for the Flag,' &c.

Public Opinion.—'Few men could "gather up the fragments into history's golden urn" in a more attractive style.'

Oxford Chronicle.—'A retrospect well worth the telling, and which could not have found a more faithful or picturesque narrator.'

Dedicated by gracious permission to His Majesty King George V.

The Annals of the King's Royal Rifle Corps.

Vol. I. 'The Royal Americans.' By Lewis Butler. Fomerly a Captain in the Regiment.

With Portraits, Illustrations and Maps. Royal 8vo. 25s. net.

Appendix dealing with Uniform, Armament and Equipment, by Major-General Astley Terry and S. M. Milne.

With numerous coloured and other illustrations. Royal 8vo. 15s. net.

The Volumes may be purchased separately.

With 8 Maps. Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d. net.

Common Sense in Foreign Policy :

A Survey of its Present Outlines and its Possible Developments.

By Sir H. H. Johnston, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.

Author of 'The Uganda Protectorate,' 'The Nile Quest,' &c.

Scotsman.—'The plain unvarnished opinions of a practical mind, of a well-travelled man of affairs, on questions which sooner or later must call for solution by the Powers. The book is distinctly stimulating.'

Letters from the Near East. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.

By the Honble. Maurice Baring.

Author of 'With the Russians in Manchuria,' &c.

Times.—'Mr. Baring records vividly and modestly the conditions of the Balkan countries as he saw them. By far the most moving chapter in the book is the description of the cholera hospital and camp at San Stefano—a tragic theme which impresses the more deeply because it is handled with restraint.'

2nd Edition. With 20 pages of Illustrations. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.

With the Bulgarian Staff. By Noel Buxton, M.P.

(Chairman of the Balkan Committee), Author of 'Europe and the Turks.'

The Globe.—'A very terrible book. It is war with the gilt off. But it is of the most absorbing interest, and no one who wishes to know what war really means should fail to read it.'

Large post 8vo. 6s. net.

Studies in British History and Politics.

By D. P. Heatley (Lecturer in History, University of Edinburgh).

Times.—'In his general reflection Mr. Heatley shows the philosophic temper, but in handling historical events and characters he shows a knowledge and a grasp of their significance which will commend the studies to the intelligent student.'

London : Smith, Elder & Co., 15 Waterloo Place, S.W.

Recent 6s. Fiction

A New Novel by the Author of ' Peter's Mother.'

Michael Ferrys.

By Mrs. Henry de la Pasture (Lady Clifford).

Author of ' Master Christopher,' ' Erica,' &c.

Times.—'Mrs. Henry de la Pasture's novels always have an engaging charm about them which is partly due to the environment, and partly to her sense of delicate humour.'
Daily Telegraph.—'It is a beautiful romance, touched with comedy as well as tragedy, and told with the author's usual skill and pathos.'

Mrs. Pratt of Paradise Farm.

By Katharine Tynan.

Author of ' Love of Sisters,' ' Honey, My Honey,' &c.

Times.—'Another of Mrs. Hinkson's endearing idylls of the country.'
World.—'A combination of charm and delicacy. Told with a tender grace which makes of the simple story an artistic achievement.'

The Confession of Richard Plantaganet.

By the late Dora Greenwell McChesney.

Author of ' Cornet Strong of Ireton's Horse,' &c.

Edited by L. Maye. With a Prefatory Memoir by Lady Macdonell.

Times.—'More than a romance. Every one in the book seems real, and there are moments when the story is deeply affecting.'

Napoleon Boswell: Tales of the Tents.

By Herbert Malleson.

With a Preface by Lady Arthur Grosvenor.

Observer.—' The book has a singular charm.'
Aberdeen Daily Journal.—'A faithful and interesting presentment of gipsy life and character. Not only a book to read, but to buy.'

The Secret of Sarm.

By the Hon. H. B. Money-Coutts and W. R. Macdonald.

Nottingham Guardian.—'A clever romance based upon the familiar dread of German schemes for the invasion of England. This supplies the motive power to a very pretty love story.'

London : Smith, Elder & Co., 15 Waterloo Place, S.W.

Recent Publications

Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

Russian Sketches: Chiefly of Peasant Life.

Translated from the Russian by Beatrix L. Tollemache.
(The Hon. Mrs. Lionel Tollemache.)

Scotsman.—'There will always be room for a book so fine in its literary quality and so faithful to its Russian originals as this volume. Graceful and polished renderings into prose of some poems and short stories that are conspicuous in Russian literature.'

Songs from Leinster. Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d. net.

By W. M. Letts.
Author of 'A Rough Way,' and 'The Mighty Army.'

Times.—'Singing with true insight and often with much beauty the thoughts of the simple Irishman or Irishwoman.'

Scotsman.—'Good English verse, with a natural and affecting brogue that harmonises fresh and sweet cadences of poetry with racy local idiom.'

Shakespeare's Hamlet: Large post 8vo. 6s. net.

A New Commentary with a Chapter on First Principles.
By Wilbraham Fitzjohn Trench, M.A. (Dublin).

Scotsman.—'It is both studious and enlightened; and cannot but prove helpful and instructive to anyone who reads it side by side with the play.'

The Ring of the Nibelung. Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d. net.

By Richard Wagner.
A new rendering in English Verse by Randle Fynes.

Globe.—'Many passages of real beauty are to be found scattered through the volume. His book should receive a warm welcome from the increasing number of English people who are interested in Wagner.'

Halfpenny Alley. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

By Marjorie Hardcastle.
With a Frontispiece by Lady Stanley, and an Introduction by Alexander Paterson, Author of 'Across the Bridges.'

Scotsman.—'Plain tales about people on the border between the workhouse and the world outside. The stories interest by sheer force of actuality. Pictures so accurate and yet so cheerful.'

Socialism Rejected. Large post 8vo. 7s. 6d. net.

By Bernard Samuelson.

Scotsman.—'Touches so nearly upon matters that concern everybody nowadays that it should not fail to attract and interest.'

Money Changing: Large post 8vo. 5s. net.

An Introduction to Foreign Exchange.
By Hartley Withers.
Author of 'The Meaning of Money,' 'Stocks and Shares,' &c.

The Financial News in a 3 column review says:—'Mr. Withers makes the topic interesting in spite of its obvious and irrepressible technicality. Occasionally he renders it really amusing.'

London: Smith, Elder & Co., 15 Waterloo Place, S.W.

DATE DUE

GAYLORD			PRINTED IN U.S.A.

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
AA 000 609 932 9